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FALL 2002

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## Barbara Heinrich

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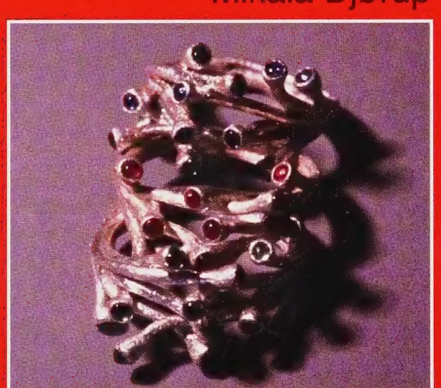

October17-November 20:

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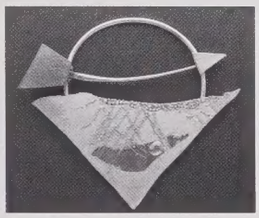

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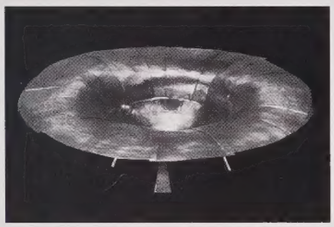

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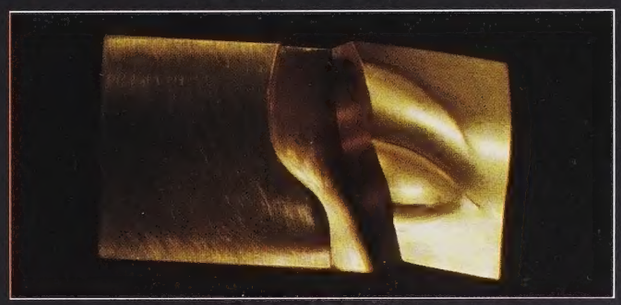

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Narciso. 1995; Brooch

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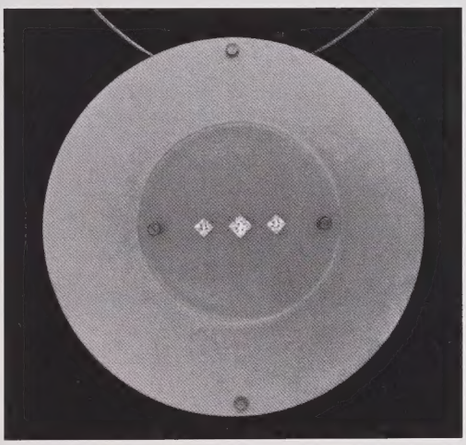

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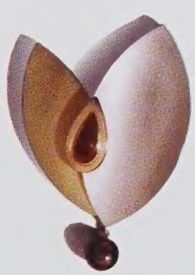

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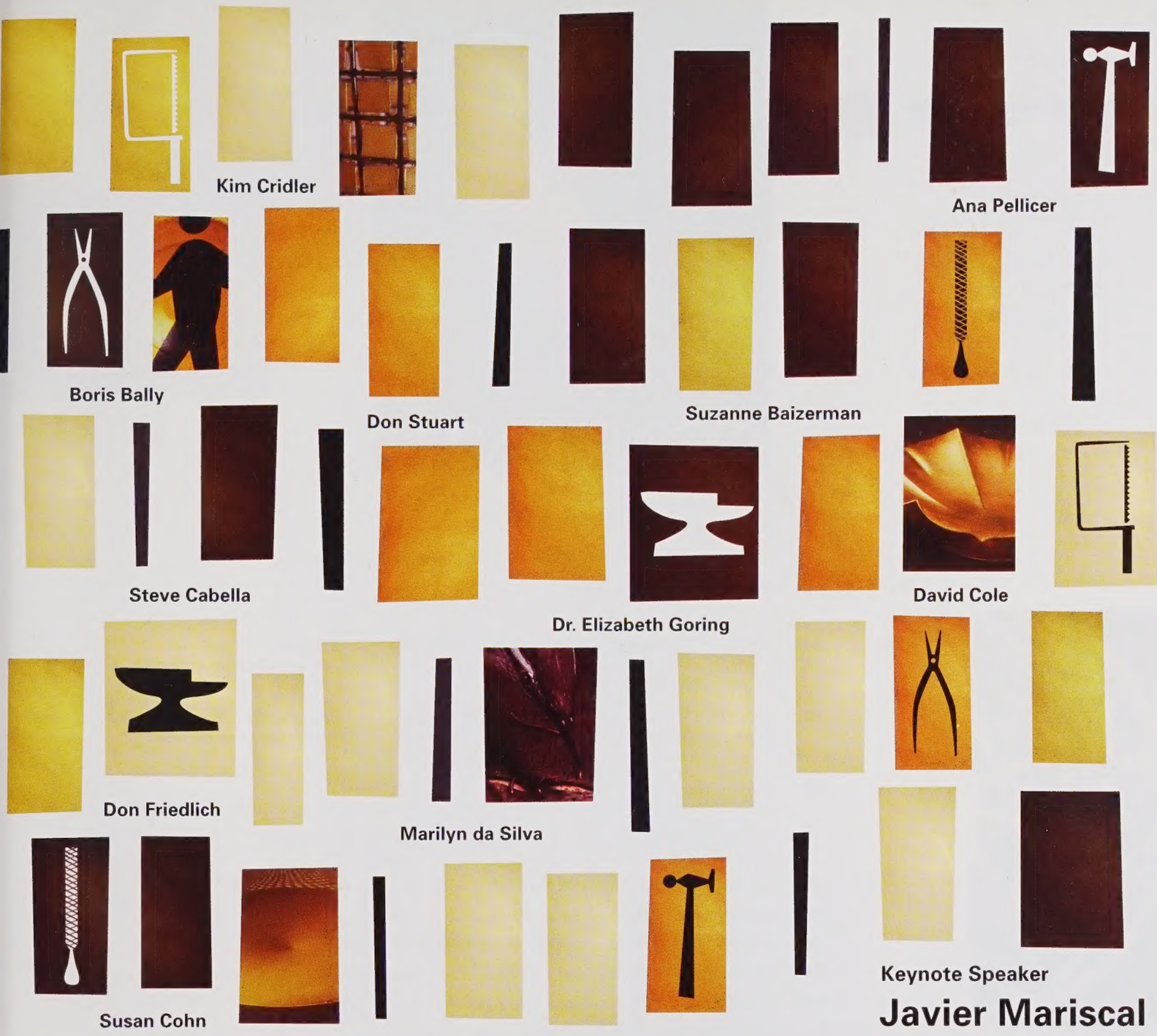


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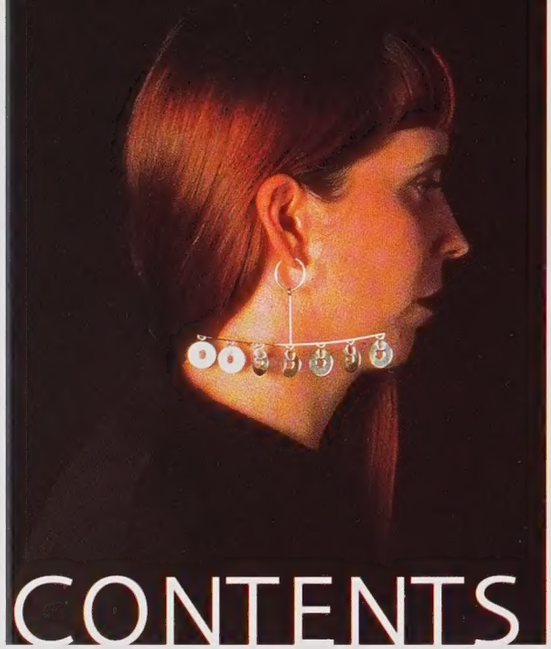

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The physically engaging works of Rachelle Thiewes serve to cultivate our self-awareness and counter mediated experience.

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Bridging the realms of science and art, Gina Pankowski's complex works take us on journeys of the imagination.

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Although now commonplace, this culinary implement was once morally suspect and slow to gain acceptance on the table.

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**clockwise from above**
Gina Pankowski
*Lattis Bracelet #19*, 1994
sterling silver, mokumé-gane
diameter 5"
Photo: Doug Yaple

Rachelle Thiewes
*Earrings*, 1999
silver, 18k white gold
3 x 5"

Rebecca Scheer
*Futensils: Dinner Fork*, 2000
forged sterling silver, rubies
length 8"

**cover**
Rachelle Thiewes
*Shimmer*, 2001
18k white gold and silver
$5\,^{7}/_{8} \times 3\,^{5}/_{8}$"
Photo: Marty Snortum

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FROM THE EDITOR

# SUZANNE RAMLJAK

We are surrounded by metal. It has become such a ubiquitous material that we tend to overlook its integral role in our lives. From the fillings in our teeth to the staples in our papers to bedsprings and electrical wires, metal is a crucial, albeit often ignored, component of modern living.

A case in point is flatware. Rarely do we stop to think about the origin and evolution of the metal implements we stick into our mouths several times each day. Anne Barros's article, "Fork Lifting," recounts the intriguing history of this demure utensil (which was once aligned with the devil), offering a long overdue appreciation for this culinary tool.

Other commonplace metal objects, like used $CO_2$ cartridges and Pachinko balls, are given a new life in the work of Abrasha, who is featured in our "Studio Visit" section. Jennifer Trask's jewelry, showcased in "Observations," also transforms mundane materials into items of adoration, encouraging us to marvel anew at our surroundings. Both of these metalsmiths fulfill one of art's key functions: to transform the ordinary into the extraordinary, the commonplace into a source of contemplation.

Art objects can also play a role in keeping us attuned and receptive to the everyday world. Rachelle Thiewes's jewelry provides a multi-sensory experience, helping us to resist distraction and anchor our attention in the present moment. As Glen Brown writes, "Their immediacy, their presence, is ultimately a bolster to one's own sense of immediacy and presence, a sense that has become in an age of relentless and pervasive mediation ever more difficult to sustain."

In a similar manner, the works of Gina Pankowski conspire to make us more aware of our physical environment. Pankowski's "instruments of the imagination" encourage our minds to freely traverse multiple domains—microcosmic and macrocosmic, orderly and chaotic—only to return us back to our own world more attentive and engaged....

SR


# METALSMITH

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the organization for jewelers,
designers and metalsmiths

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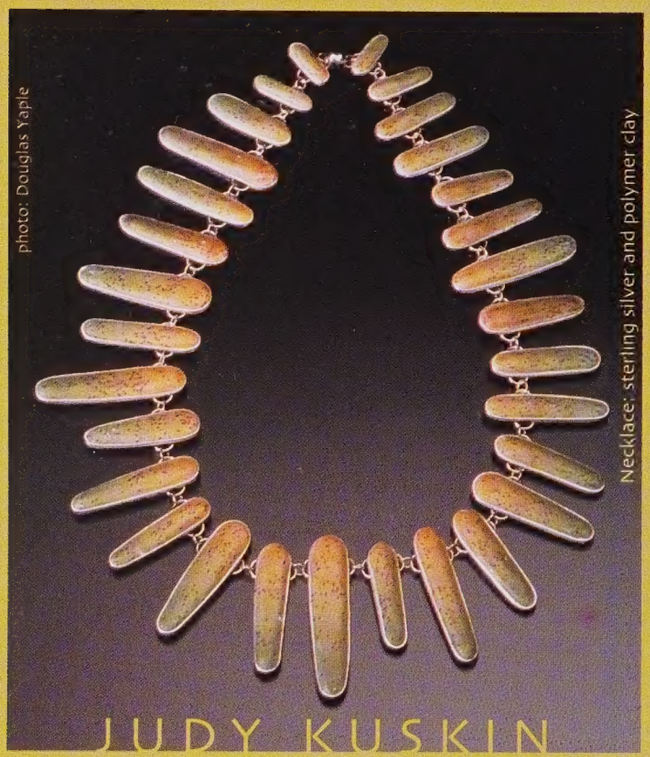


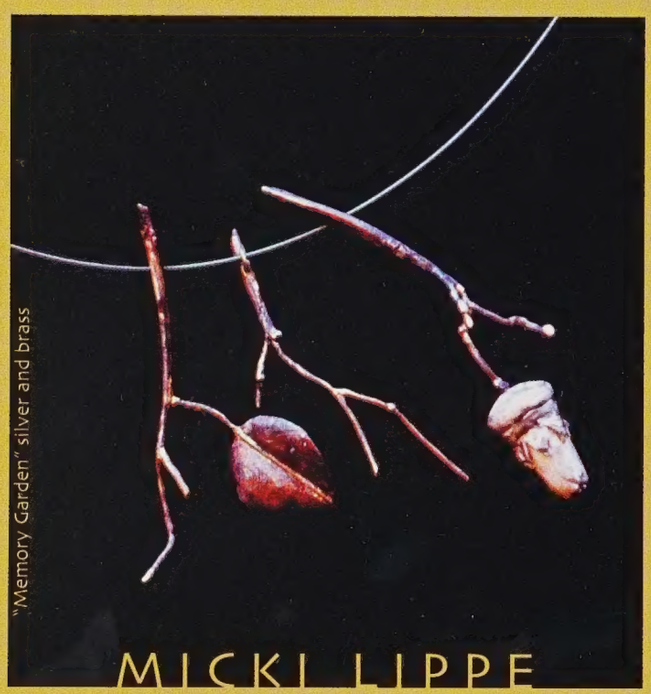


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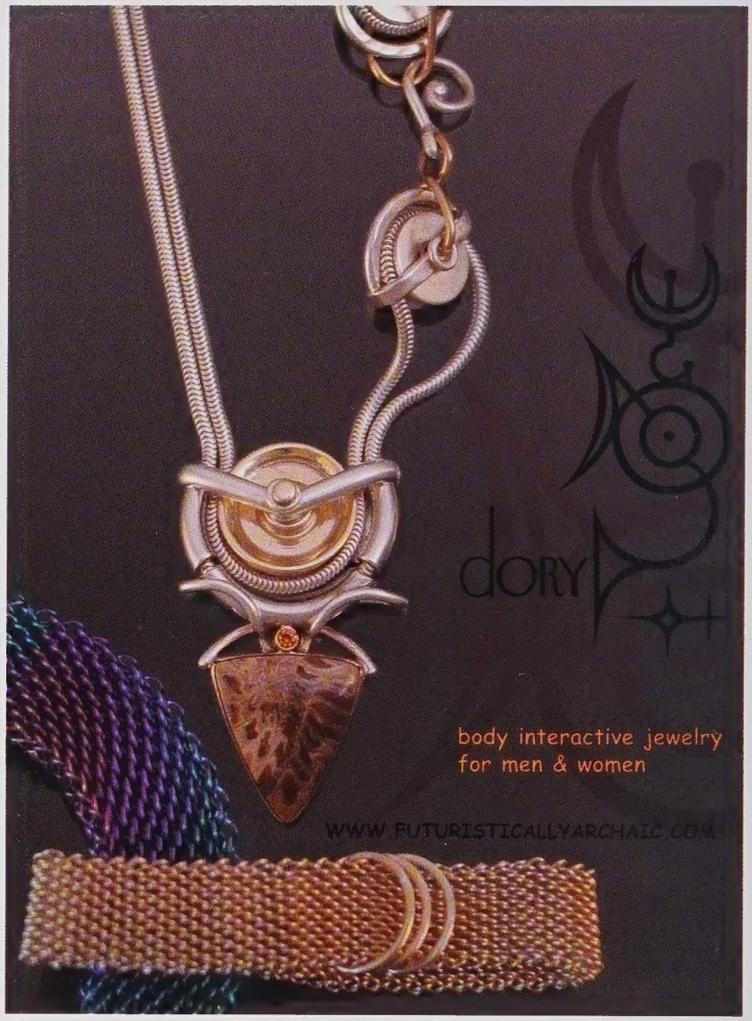


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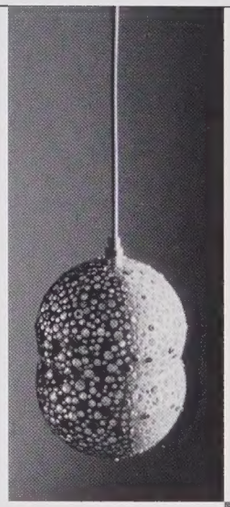

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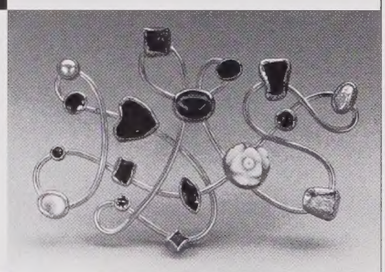

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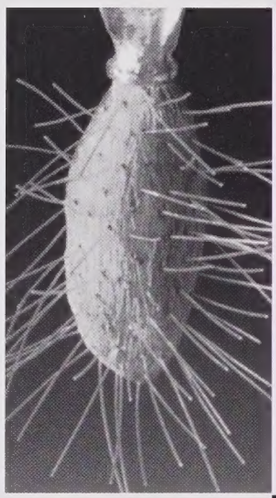
+valerie mitchell



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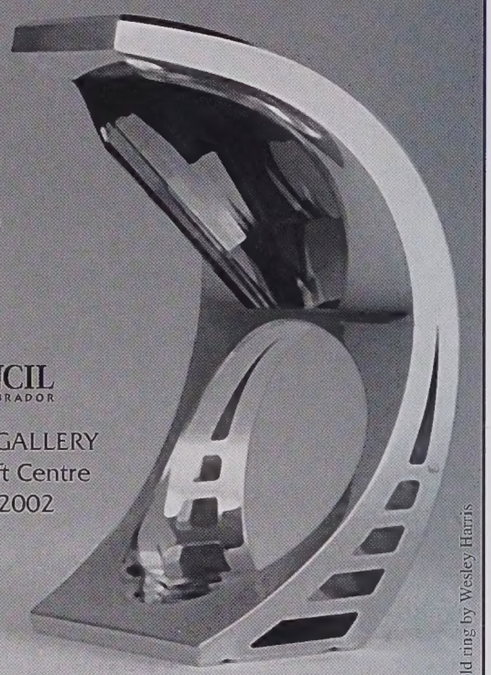
MICHAEL MASSIE, JIM MAUNDER



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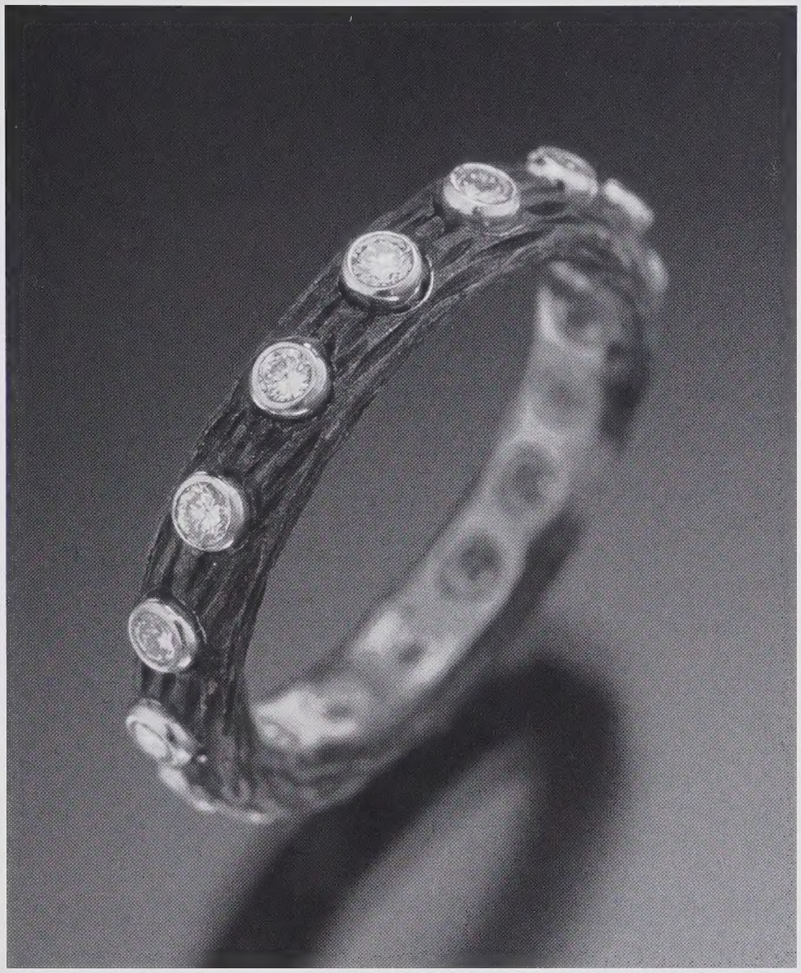

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Photo: Hap Sakwa

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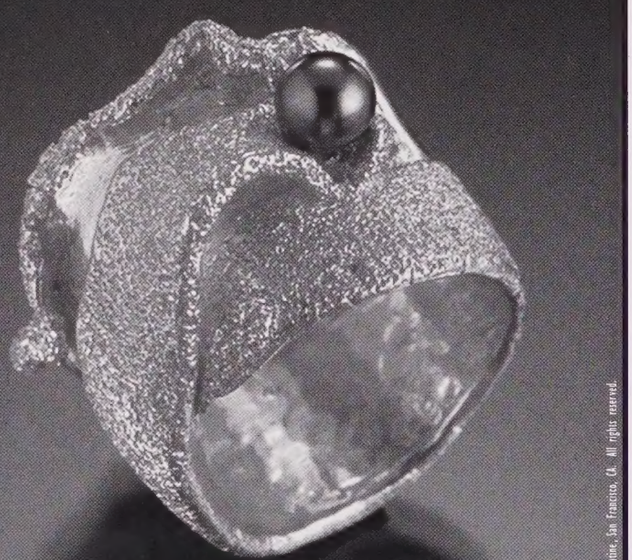

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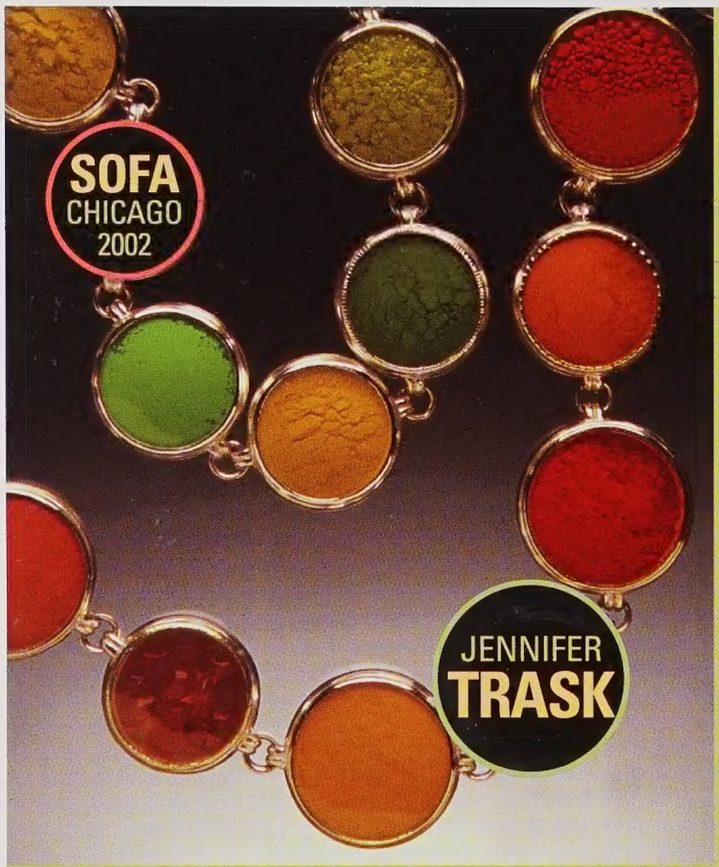


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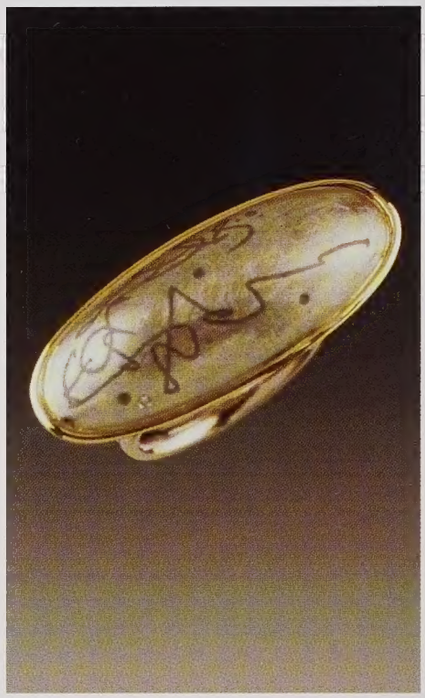

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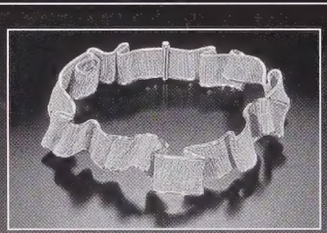

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# OBSERVATIONS

## The Work of Jennifer Trask

by Patricia Harris and David Lyon

*Quatrefoil* (brooches), 2001
silver, 18k and 22k gold, mixed media
each 1 3/4" wide

Jennifer Trask sometimes seems to approach jewelry like a natural historian, filling locket-sized, glass-topped silver and gold cases with specimens isolated from the world around her. She likens herself to a Victorian taxonomist, and a whiff of the musty museum case does attend her forms. She affirms the association by inscribing the backs of the cases with the common and scientific names of the objects within.

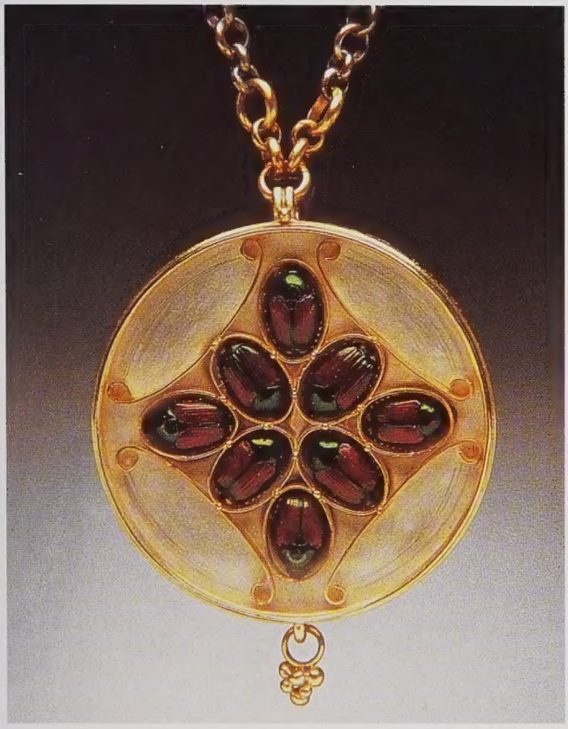
But Trask borrows the formal accoutrements of taxonomy to achieve a far subtler artistic effect. By definition, taxonomy is a reductive science. Once an object or an experience has been named and categorized, it loses its individuality and becomes merely part of a larger structure. The taxonomist plays the role of the Biblical Adam, who asserted his dominion over all the animals by giving them their names. In contrast, Trask's art derives its tension from juxtaposing her meticulous presentation with a sheer wonderment at what's inside those perfect little cases.

By isolating objects under glass, Trask transforms the mundane into an object of adoration by focusing on color and form. She sets the iridescent carcasses of Japanese beetles into gold as if they were cabochon gems. An entomologist would mount the beetles as type specimens; Trask bids us to marvel at the transubstantiation from scourge into splendor.

Contrary to the distance between observer and observed that is the bedrock of Victorian science, Trask's jewelry invites intimacy and complicity. The scale and shape of the cases in each piece deliberately invoke the jeweler's tradition of the locket. Made of precious metals, the pieces are meant to be handled or worn on the finger, around the neck, pinned over the heart. They are vital and personal–always right next to the pulse.

Unlike traditional lockets, Trask's constructions reveal rather than conceal their contents. Some of her best-known pieces contain rare earths sold as painter's pigments, and Trask employs that sheer color to marvelous effect in bracelets, necklaces, and rings. The sifting powder within each receptacle provides a texture every bit as pleasing as the refractions of a gemstone. She treats the earths as precious, and they become precious as a result. Far from the Apollonian impulse for order, Trask's enthusiasm evokes a Dionysian impulse to joy.

Her ability to balance the analytical and the celebratory enables Trask to find unexpected beauty, even in conventionally pretty objects such as peacock feathers. In her Pavo series, she dissects the iridescent feathers into their constituent forms, each presented in a manner that calls attention to its abstract beauty. She encases a loose jumble of unfurled feathers beneath a glass bezel and says, in effect: "Behold the potential wonder." In another piece, she selects just a slice of the feather and twists it in a spiral—a sword—which evokes



**clockwise from top left**
*Coleoptera* (pendant), 2001
18k and 22k gold, fine silver, beetles, antique lens
diameter 2"

*Pavo* (necklace), 2001
18k and 22k gold, pigments, peacock feathers
length 22"

*Pavo Sword* (brooch), 2001
silver, 18k green, 14k gold, antique lens, peacock sword feather
height 1 3/4"

*Popillia Japonica* (brooch), 2001
18k and 22k gold, Japanese beetles
height 1 1/2"

*Katydid* (Tettigoniidae)
(wall piece and brooch), 2001
18k and 22k gold, katydid wings, antique eyeglass, wood, copper
5 x 3"

the magnificence of the whole structure.

Trask's recent wall pieces, which integrate brooches into mounts, delightfully subvert her taxonomic impulses through sheer sensuality. Perhaps one of the purest examples of this process centers on the delicate, gleaming lace of katydid wings mounted beneath a magnifying glass. The jumble of structures belies its rationalist presentation. Unlike the taxonomist, who consigns the wonders of the world to their appropriate drawers and shelves, Trask holds them up for all to see. Here, she seems to say, is the end point of all contemplation: to come face to face with the world in miniature. ■

**Patricia Harris and David Lyon** are both writers and critics based in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

# STUDIO VISIT

## Abrasha

by Jennifer Cross Gans

**above**
Abrasha at his milling machine, 2002
Photo: Ellis Gans

**right**
*Royal Pachinko Ball Bracelet*, 1992
stainless steel, 18k gold, pachinko balls
diameter 4"
Photo: Ronnie Tsai

In Abrasha's studio on the sixth floor of the Shreve Building in downtown San Francisco, there's a photograph of the area just after the 1906 earthquake, in which his building stands in lonely splendor amid the rubble. It's good to know in this quake-prone city that one's place of work is reasonably safe. It's also useful that the building is still home to many in the jewelry business and its ancilliary trades, and even its namesake, Shreve.

Abrasha occupies about 300 square feet of neat, well organized space. Unlike many jewelers, who make do with garages, kitchen tables, barns, and industrial offices, often characterized by a lack of light, he enjoys a corner office with large picture windows. Against the walls are an office desk, jewelers' workbenches, and fabrication equipment, and in the center are more heavy-duty items, such as rolling mills, a lathe, and milling machine; most are old but still in fine working condition.

Abrasha—who dropped his unpronounceable surname in favor of the Russian diminutive for Abraham–does not refer to himself as a jeweler. "Don't call me that. Please call me a goldsmith!" He does not even call himself an artist, but admits to being pleased if others so regard him.

Dutch-born and European-educated, Abrasha is justifiably proud of his special hallmark, awarded to him in Amsterdam for achievement as a master goldsmith. He earned it the hard way, by studying for two years at the School for Goldsmiths in Pforzheim, Germany. After that, he served a one-year apprenticeship with a commercial firm, took a state exam that certified him as a goldsmith, then worked for the late professor Klaus Ullrich, one of Germany's leading jewelry artists. In 1977 he left for the States.

He has kept a handful of souvenirs of his tough student years. There's no art among them, nor wacky design, nor alternative materials—just impeccably crafted samples of basic metal fabrication techniques, including a bank of stones, set "à jour."

Today is not the best day to visit. He is working against the clock to finish a ring for an international jewelry competition. Like most of his pieces, this is an essay in sleek, post-industrial design: stainless steel, gold, and diamonds, mostly cold-connected. However, Abrasha is

focused, high-energy, and able to multitask sawing, fitting, answering the phone, and talking nonstop. He pauses for breath only long enough to give his sawblade a careful lick ("Spit is the best lubricant there is, and doesn't leave a sticky trail like Bur-Life or beeswax." He's right!).

Abrasha does not particularly like to talk about his artistic vision. He does, however, concede the influences of the work of his teacher Ullrich, the Bauhaus movement, and Japanese design, which share the appearance of effortless simplicity but in fact require consummate execution.

He revels in technology, particularly clean geometric forms, combining gold, platinum, and diamonds with such nontraditional materials as stainless steel, used $CO_2$ cartridges, and Pachinko balls. He is attracted to all kinds of machinery, hardware, machinists' catalogues, nuts, screws, and odd metal parts, which either inspire whole new designs or get converted into ingenious cold connections. His work is as smooth as a seal in water, colored only by counter-sunk gold rivets or playful ruby beads in mini stainless steel cages.

Like many jewelers, he pays the rent with wedding and engagement bands, and limited-production pieces, sold either through galleries, shows such as SOFA and ACC, or via the Internet. He also does commissions, some of which are inspired by his secular Jewish roots, such as mezuzahs, menorahs, and ceremonial vessels.

Abrasha is happier talking about one of his major passions–high standards of craftsmanship in jewelrymaking. And he's pretty opinionated about giving the U.S. a low rating, as compared to much of Europe. "Each year, art schools in the U.S. graduate more artists than worked during the entire Renaissance," he says, between licks of his blade. "Over 90 percent will never earn a living in their field. I have nothing but contempt for most of the crafts and metals education in this country."

While some people might dispute Abrasha about this, his professional record speaks for itself. His honors and awards include a Diamonds International Awards Certificate of Merit (1986), a first-place award in the American Jewelry Design Council competition (1992), a first-prize Niche Award (1998), and "Best of Show" awards at the American Crafts Council show in San Francisco (1999 and 2001). He has pieces in California's Oakland Museum, and in the Renwick Gallery, Washington, D.C. He's also been a metals instructor at the California College of Arts and Crafts in San Francisco and the Revere Academy.

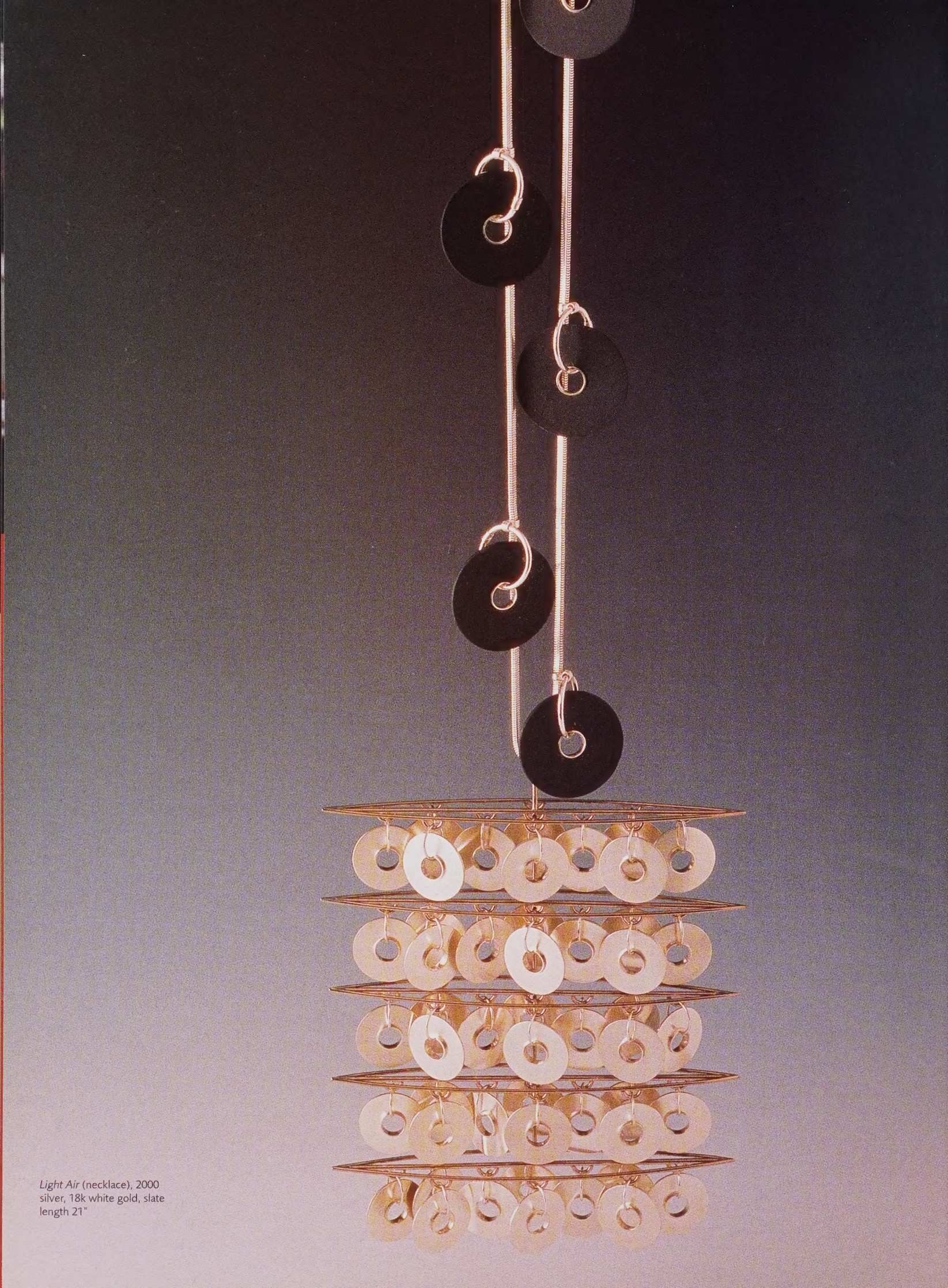
Like many artists, Abrasha is a control freak, even to the extent of making his own high-karat gold alloys, a time-consuming and irritating process he endured for about 20 years, mainly to produce material that was acceptably zinc-free. "While zinc makes the alloy paler and easier to work," he explains, "it adds to the volume—rather like adding bread to meat loaf." A year ago, he abandoned this particular chore and began buying zinc-free alloy from David Fell.

Abrasha is no St. Eligius (the patron saint of jewelers, 588-660 A.D.), however, creating modern masterworks the medieval way. A confessed computer enthusiast, he embraced computer-assisted design, which he found ideal for his largely geometric designs. CAD replaced his 10-year-old 2-D program, and liberated him from ever needing to create more of his exquisite colored pencil or drypoint renderings. After many hundreds of hours struggling on his home computer, he mastered the trueSpace program, which he values for its flexibility and speed in making 3-D models. When finalized, he mostly constructs the designs himself or sends out some of the components to a machinist who's familiar with computer-assisted manufacture.

An extremely hard worker, Abrasha molds his studio time to meet the needs of his family and share some of the work of child-raising with his wife, Maria, a professional "life coach." Abrasha takes the early-morning shift, preparing breakfast for his sons (ages 10 and 6), supervising violin practice, and taking them to school. Hitting his studio by mid-morning, he works alone until 7 P.M. or later, and often works Saturdays, though he makes time to volunteer at his sons' school art classes. A late father, Abrasha's boys were born when he was in his forties, and he will be glued to his bench until retirement age to see them through college. It's fortunate he loves his work. ■

A corner of Abrasha's San Francisco studio, 2002.
Photo: Ellis Gans

**Jennifer Cross Gans** is a writer and studio jeweler in San Francisco.



*Light Air* (necklace), 2000
silver, 18k white gold, slate
length 21"

# Rachelle Thiewes

## The Immediacy of Light

by Glen R. Brown

An obvious irony arises when jewelry that is designed to provide an immediate and intimate tactile experience is mediated.

The work of Rachelle Thiewes—which epitomizes the jeweler's awareness not only of the body but, amid increasingly virtual experiences, of the body's urgent need for *self-awareness*—rarely escapes this irony. Only a relatively small number of people have actually worn her work, or even had the opportunity to handle it. Like so many craft objects, Thiewes's work is thus destined to be known primarily through the very media that it is devised to resist. Its representation in words and photographs cannot help but oppose its intent, transform it into a symbol rather than an object that, at least ostensibly, owes its power to move not to metaphor but to the actual force of gravity. Mediated by words, it is too easily seized by theory to make an impression equal to that which it produces physically. For this reason, theorization of Thiewes's work always seems to eclipse it. The result, however, is not obliteration of the work. The commentary on Thiewes's jewelry only conveys the ultimate inability to grasp it in representation, and this can only be construed as a victory for the jewelry itself.

The problem of distortion in representing Thiewes's jewelry, of describing in words something that accomplishes its purpose without them, carries an additional irony. Unlike work that is meant to appeal primarily to the eye—and which, in the extreme, even conditions itself to be photographed and risks everything on its presentation in that mode—Thiewes's jewelry is elusive of photographic mediation. A key aspect of what it *is* inheres in what it *does*, and that can only be understood firsthand. Consequently, the tendency in writing about Thiewes's work has been to emphasize its irreducibility to imagery, or words, and as a result her work is more often talked *around* than about. It becomes the starting point for speculation on issues concerning the body, gender, social signification or psychology, and in the process it becomes effectively invisible as jewelry. Its emphasis on immediate experience, on a certain unavoidable presence, leads to its absence in representation.

To experience Thiewes's jewelry in person is not only to confirm that it cannot be wholly represented but also to recognize the degree to which it has been subtly, and surely unwittingly, *misrepresented*—with an emphasis on the tactility obscuring the significance of its visual effects. That Thiewes has herself reflected upon this tendency is suggested by the important changes that have occurred in her jewelry since the fall of 1999. Her current work, comprising a series of earrings, bracelets, and short necklaces, has not wavered in its commitment to enhancing the body's self-awareness, nor has it compromised in its resistance to the photographic form. The new element, or rather the element that has been recently re-emphasized in Thiewes's jewelry, is *light*—a white light with the intensity of bright sunlight before its refraction and dispersal into the separate wave lengths of the spectrum. The surfaces of her new works shine, even flash, in a manner that is as impossible

to ignore in person as it is to represent through words or even photographs.

In part, the quality of light in Thiewes's recent work has a personal significance. Although her work has not involved narrative per se since her graduate school days, her jewelry has never been entirely detached from the particulars of her experience. The importance afforded to light in her recent work is not the consequence of an abstract aesthetic decision but rather a response to the landscape with which she has become intimately familiar since joining the faculty at the University of Texas, El Paso nearly 25 years ago. "I've always been mesmerized by the light in the desert, the light on the mountains," she explains. "There are times when it's incredibly beautiful here and there are times when the light is just bleaching. In the summertime in El Paso, from the middle of the day until about 3:00, if you are out driving and you look at the mountains, it hurts. The sun is so brilliant, and the light is so white when it bounces off the mountains. There's no subtlety to it at all." The powerful effects of light in the desert can, in fact, at times seem to obliterate both color and the gray scale.

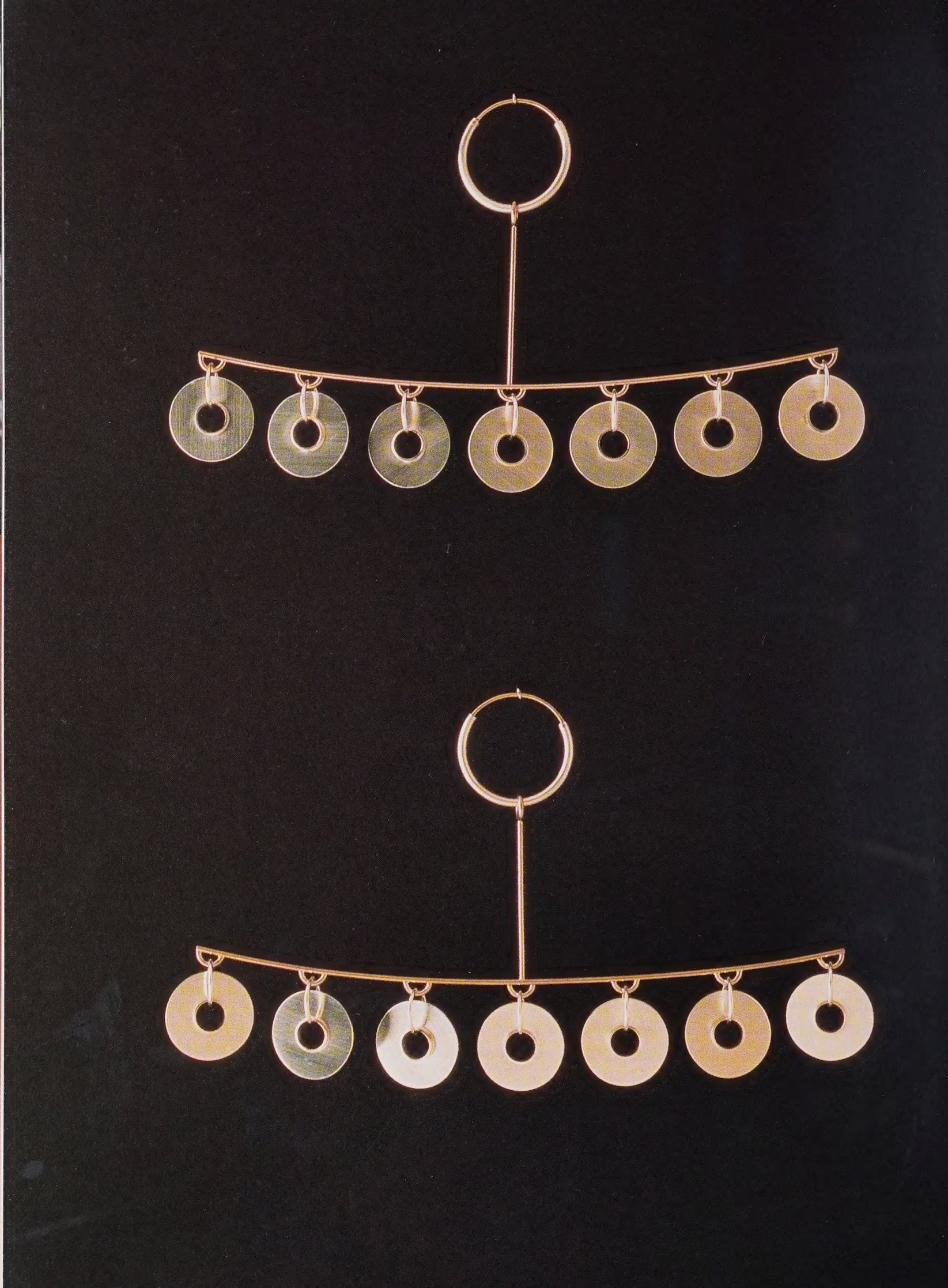
*Shimmer* (bracelet), 2001
18k white gold, silver
2 1/4 x 4 1/4"

The monochromatic intensity of her surroundings seems a logical explanation for the fact that, while Thiewes is not a colorist, she has in her previous work demonstrated a mastery of strong tonal contrast. In her black-and-white compositions from the 1980s and 1990s, a controlled fire scale conflicted with areas of polished silver, and white scratch marks created patterns on the rich matte surfaces of slate disks. The play of actual light and shadow on her pieces was also a significant factor in their visual effect, especially given the intent of her work to move in rhythm with the body. Created so that the components of a bracelet, necklace, brooch, or pair of earrings tumbled in a random cluster of forms when in use, her jewelry depended partly upon tonal contrast to inform the viewer of subtle shifts in the position of elements. Although the wearer of a piece would ordinarily be aware of these small transitions through changes in weight, pressure, and point of stimulus on the body, the fact that Thiewes would pay such careful attention to the visual impression created by her pieces in motion suggests that her work has never been exclusively for the wearer. Nor is it conceived purely on an intimate scale. The appearance of her work from a distance has always been a significant consideration in her designs.

That appearance is now created primarily through bright light and very little shadow, an exploitation almost exclusively of the white end of the tonal range. Gone is the dark fire scale, and the familiar black slate disks have been incorporated only sparingly in a few necklaces since 1999. The disks themselves, however, fashioned entirely from silver, remain integral to Thiewes's compositions. At five-eighths of an inch, they are smaller than the slate disks, a consequence of her inclination to incorporate them into her pieces in greater numbers while avoiding the impression of excessive weight. "I wanted them to appear to float, to be lighter than air," she explains.

Thiewes integrates the disks with thin wire structures to create a visual equilibrium of disparate forms. Her compositions have always evolved through a reconciliation of conflicting elements. Achieving the balance she desired in her recent work required scores of test pieces and a general simplification of her compositions.

*Shimmer* (bracelet), 2001
18k white gold, silver
$2\frac{1}{4} \times 4\frac{1}{2}$"



**opposite and above**
*Earrings*, 1999
silver, 18k white gold
3 x 5"
(on model)

"When I started these, I had the idea of stripping things down from the complexity of cluster forms I was creating," she explains. "With those pieces, you saw the individual forms but only after you saw the cluster. In the new work I wanted everything to be clear and orderly."

The change in Thiewes's work could not, however, be summarized so simply. The contrast between order and disorder—or more properly, spontaneity—is equally important in her previous and current jewelry, a result of a long familiarity with the play between rhythm and improvisation in jazz music. In her earlier jewelry, she employed the cluster formation as a counterpart to the orderly arrangement of elements that became evident when works were removed from the body and laid flat. Her early cluster pieces began as logical, regularly patterned forms, but ended up, under the influence of gravity and the energy of the body in motion, as more organic and unpredictable groupings. Her new work retains the same kind of relationship between order and disorder. But in these pieces the components do not physically rearrange themselves; reflection of light is the source of visual disruption. "If someone is walking while wearing one of these pieces, you'll only see a chaos of light," Thiewes explains. "You become so involved with the light that you lose the sense of the regular form."

The contrast between order and disorder—or more properly, spontaneity—is equally important in her previous and current jewelry, a result of a long familiarity with the play between rhythm and improvisation in jazz music.

In her recent work, the regularity of the form is only partly a consequence of the uniformity of the silver disks. Just as important are the thin wire structures from which the disks are suspended at precise intervals. A highly polished

white gold that is more brilliantly reflective than the satiny silver disks, the wire acts both as a crisp linear compositional element and a variable in the disorderly effects of light. Its imposition of order on the dangling components of her work was an ideal solution to the problem of rendering visual the tension between logic and chaos in a new way. Her incorporation of wire structures is not, however, purely an innovation devised in the fall of 1999. For some time Thiewes had contemplated a transformation toward more linear construction. Her recent work, in fact, has its origins in a series of sketches produced four years earlier while traveling home on an airplane after a stint teaching a master class at the Royal College of Art in London in 1995. The drawings, which depicted cagelike bracelets, were stored away for a time while Thiewes mulled them over. The opportunity to act toward a more stable structure in her work finally came when she received a faculty development grant from her university that permitted a year's leave from teaching.

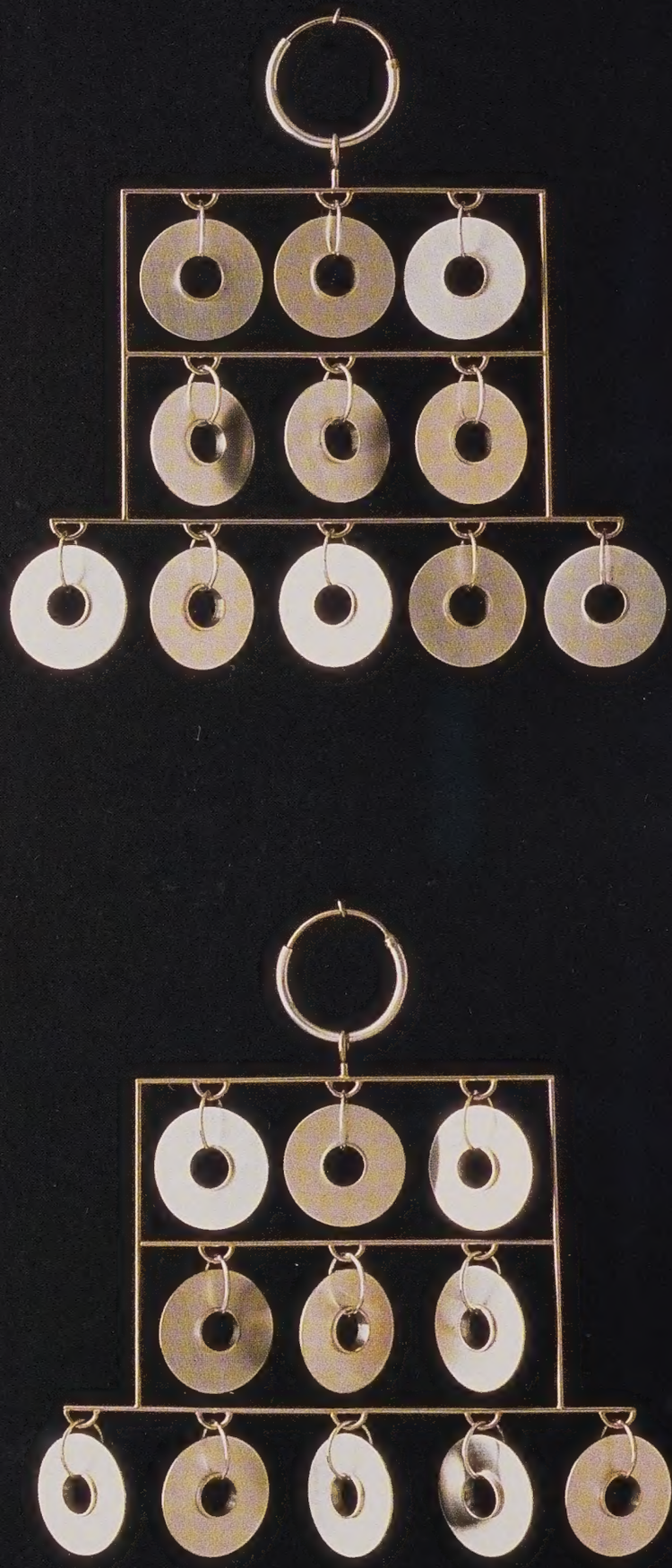
"In the African section I encountered some gigantic earrings. I'd seen them before, but coming upon them again reaffirmed that it was fine to work large."

"It was exciting to bring out the drawings that I'd made several years before," Thiewes recalls. "They were just a few lines, the sketch-on-a-napkin sort of thing, but the changes that I made were in response to the general ideas that they conveyed." Determined to proceed in a cautious manner from simple configurations to designs of increasing complexity, she produced a series of experimental earrings, which ended up as significant works in their own right. In the first pair, each earring incorporated a vertical white-gold wire, slightly curved and about four inches in length, from which five pairs of silver disks could be suspended at intervals of slightly less than an inch. Subsequent compositions became progressively more daring, as she began to acquire a better sense of how light reacted to the wires and disks as the pieces moved. Due to their length, the earliest earrings tended to rest on the collarbone, with the result that any lateral movement of the head caused a shift in the angle of the wires and a consequent oscillation of the silver disks.

Always concerned with the physical effects of her jewelry, Thiewes initially took pains to assure that the disks would not cause an excessive weight on the earlobe. After completing the second pair of earrings, however, she decided to let her desire for a particular visual impression take priority over practical considerations. In part, her decision to throw caution to the wind was prompted by a reacquaintance with historical precedent. "About the time that I started the earrings, I visited the Metropolitan Museum of Art," she recalls. "In the African section I encountered some gigantic earrings. I'd seen them before, but coming upon them again reaffirmed that it was fine to work large." Moreover, the scale of Theiwes's recent work requires, perhaps even more than any of her previous production, that the wearer always be cognizant of her movements. While the white gold wires are slightly more durable than those of silver, they are nonetheless delicate and susceptible to damage if one moves injudiciously. More than once, pieces have returned from exhibitions in need of straightening.

The physical forces acting upon her relatively fragile structures are of particular interest to Thiewes and sometimes have resulted in pleasant surprises. In her third pair of wire-structure earrings, for example, she experimented with the configuration of an inverted T, from which she dangles a row of seven disks. Her concern that the piece might push to the extreme the weight borne by the earlobe proved unfounded. On the contrary the lateral forces created a cantilever effect, actually causing the earrings to feel lighter than if the disks had been suspended in a cluster. Such engineering principles have long fascinated Thiewes. "I like the possibilities of architecture," she explains. "What you can do in terms of working with form is almost like the impossible. I love looking at architecture that plays with form and works with light and the landscape. I guess that because I have been in tune with architecture for such a long time I've come to see the body as having architectural qualities."

*Earrings*, 1999
silver, 18k gold, carved slate
length 4 $^{1}/_{2}$"



*Earrings*, 2000
silver, 18k white gold
3 1/4 x 3 1/4"

Although her earliest wire-and-disk earrings were conceived as flat forms, Thiewes's intention was eventually, as per the earlier sketches, to expand her designs into three-dimensional frameworks. Subsequent earrings paired curved horizontal wires to create narrow oval shapes on planes perpendicular to that of the main structure. These more volumetric structures permitted the suspension of rows of disks at the same level, sometimes in pairs and sometimes offset, to produce a greater visual complexity. The innovation would prove especially important in a series of three necklaces that Thiewes produced in 2000. Extending to the waist, these necklaces are shorter and tend to hang closer to the body than her earlier works. The boxlike construction of the frame is, as a consequence, crucial to the desired effect, since the outer row of suspended disks remains raised and free to move even when the piece is lying firmly against the body. In addition to the shifting reflections that such a configuration makes possible, the open distribution of disks facilitates a high-pitched metallic rustling like that of a diminutive wind chime, another characteristic of Thiewes's work that defies representation.

Thiewes focuses on one area of the body before moving to another; she produces a series of earrings in relation to the head before beginning to explore the possibilities of necklaces relating to the torso. Therefore, she only came to exploit the full potential of her earlier sketches when she began work on a series of four bracelets, completed in 2001. To achieve the impression of a linear extension of the body's contours, she produced a number of full-scale models in an effort to lend the suspended disks a floating appearance as well as make them conducive to a varied reflection of light. Only after a good deal of trial and error were the engineering problems resolved for each of the unique bracelets: the first is cylindrical and visually compact; the second is simpler and airier; the third juxtaposes circular and triangular forms; and the fourth is columnar. In each, however, the geometric properties of the linear structures are ultimately less important than the various configurations of light they produce when worn. Situated around the wrist, they are, of course, within the wearer's field of vision, but their full visual effect is only experienced at a distance.

These recent bracelets are in many ways the epitome of Thiewes's jewelry, a comprehensive presentation of the qualities that set her work apart from any that surrenders itself willingly to representation. Rather than accommodating mediation—flattening itself physically in anticipation of photographic representation, or metaphorically, in preparation for representation through theory—Thiewes's work has tendentiously emphasized dimensions of tactility, sound, and light. Its concern is for immediate experience, and any description of its effects, no matter how detailed, cannot help but underscore the inadequacy of the description itself. The impressions of her jewelry are both instantaneous and fleeting—in the purest sense they are products of the moment that no medium can sustain. Sudden shifts of weight, ripples of sound, and flashes of light are both integral to her work and impossible to embody in any surrogate form; in contrast to the virtual, Thiewes's work is actual. Between the wearer's intimate impressions of weight and movement against the body, the viewer's detached observation of shifting configurations of light, and the sounds that are simultaneously experienced by both, are objects that cannot be displaced. The reality of their condition is crucial. For Thiewes, their immediacy, their presence, is ultimately a bolster to one's own sense of immediacy and presence, a sense that has become in an age of relentless and pervasive mediation ever more difficult to sustain. ■

**Between the wearer's intimate impressions of weight and movement against the body, the viewer's detached observation of shifting configurations of light, and the sounds that are simultaneously experienced by both, are objects that cannot be displaced.**

**Glen R. Brown** is associate professor of art history at Kansas State University.

*Tighra #3 Necklace*, 2000
14k gold, sterling silver, rock crystal,
borosilicate glass, patina
length 37"
Photo: Doug Yaple

# Instruments of Imagination

## The Jewelry of Gina Pankowski

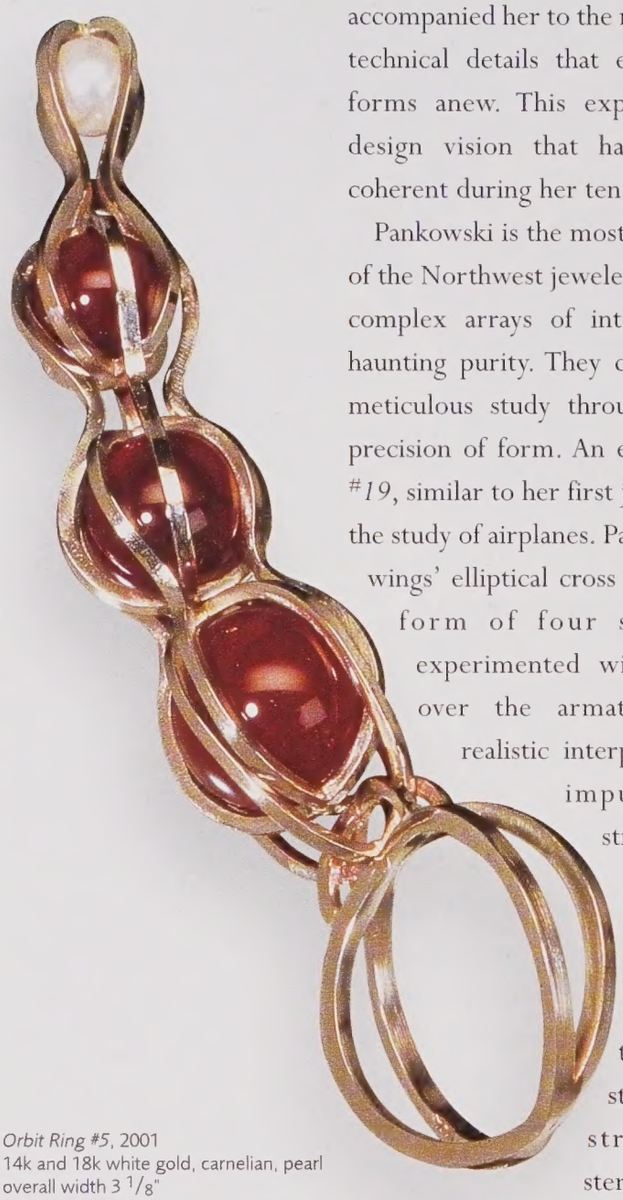
by Tacey A. Rosolowski

I'm interested in the boundaries of perception, what affects what happens around a form. The three-dimensional drawing I do in my work–it's stripping a form to its structure, seeing its mechanics, seeing how that structure works.[1] Gina Pankowski

*Vertebra Orbit, Bone Flower, Flower Orbit*—titles such as these demonstrate how Gina Pankowski blends many sources of inspiration: the growth patterns of plants in her garden; the machines and architectural details that have fascinated her since childhood; skeletal structure; one-celled organisms; cosmic design. "I'm never specifically working from an idea or image," Pankowski claims. "I'm creating something that comes from a collection of imagery." Fundamentally, she is guided by an impulse to link radically different phenomena through structure. *Sphere Necklace*, for example, with its mechanical-organic melding of struts and ball-and-socket joints, might be "a prosthetic joint, or a satellite, or an organism," as Pankowski observes. "I'm making connections in patterns and forms through more than one reality."

Pankowski describes her design strategy as a process of "looking closely," a simple phrase for a complex perspective she shares with many artists. The power of Cezanne's painting, says philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, arises from its capacity for "breaking the skin of things to show how things become things, how the world becomes world."[2] Pankowski's aesthetic stretches ordinary perception in a similar way, evoking the processes that allow form to emerge. The graduated series of glass elements in *Tighra 3 Necklace* seems to grow from its silver chain, and it conjures dynamic images: a frond of seaweed sliding through languid waves; perhaps ice forming around stones as water eddies down a chilly stream. Such a piece emerges from a profound concern with the nature of the physical world. In Pankowski's case, the artistic sensibility at work has implicit ties to chaos theory and fractal science, with their revisionist implications for aesthetics. Her jewelry raises the stakes of linking scientific and aesthetic modes of understanding because of its sensuous tactility.

"I've always been a builder and a maker," Pankowski asserts. She treasures photographs taken in the early 1930s, when her grandfather worked as a crane operator on the Grand Coolee Dam: for Pankowski, the images of reshaped earth, scaffolding, and machinery meld geological and manmade structures. The Boeing Museum was a natural attraction for this lifelong resident of Seattle; she has made many trips there over the years to examine early airplane designs. In fact, in 1993, the final year of her metals program at the University of Washington-Seattle, the cross-sections of airplane wings inspired her first jewelry experiments. Her husband, an aerospace engineering major, had



*Orbit Ring #5*, 2001
14k and 18k white gold, carnelian, pearl
overall width 3 1/8"
Photo: Doug Yaple

accompanied her to the museum and pointed out technical details that enabled her to see the forms anew. This experience inaugurated a design vision that has only become more coherent during her ten-year career.

Pankowski is the most design- and form-based of the Northwest jewelers. Even her pieces with complex arrays of interlocking parts have a haunting purity. They communicate a sense of meticulous study through clarity of line and precision of form. An example is *Lattis Bracelet #19*, similar to her first jewelry designs based on the study of airplanes. Pankowski interpreted the wings' elliptical cross section as a pod-shaped form of four struts. She briefly experimented with stretching material over the armatures, but abandoned realistic interpretation, guided by an impulse to explore the stripped skeleton.

*Lattis Bracelet #19* first confronts the eye with a tangle of lines. Closer inspection reveals a tight grouping of four-strut pods. In each, one strut is fabricated of sterling silver and copper *mokumé-gane*, and Pankowski aligned these elements so a band of alternating dark and light stripes carries the eye around the surface of the bracelet. This band establishes a striking contrast between the static elements of armature and its own endless movement over the doughnut surface. It also gives this piece an ambiguous quality. The interior complexity threatens to burst outward, held back by the band that also clarifies the form's construction and the relation of each part to the whole. As a result, the piece seems poised between order and randomness, an abstract meditation on structure, though its form is simultaneously familiar. Like so many of Pankowski's pieces, it looks like something—perhaps many things, organic or inorganic—whose name and concrete image hover just at the edge of consciousness.

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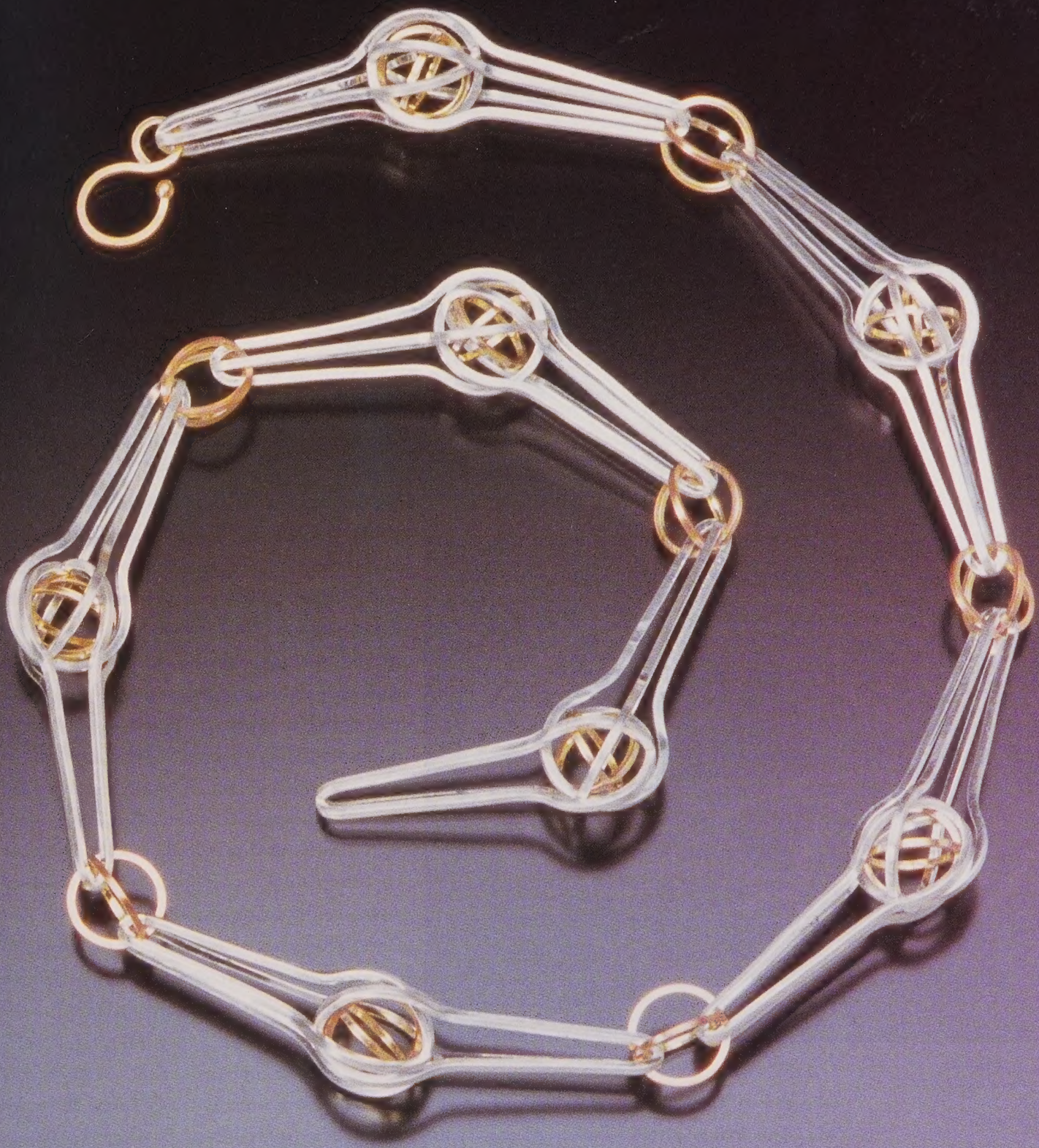
Science writer John Briggs might say that this form is a "reflectaphor," an image that creates a tension between similarity and difference "so dynamic that it jars the brain into wonder, awe, perplexity, and a sense of unexpected truth or beauty."[3] Briggs uses the term to describe art forms that draw on paradigms of fractal science. Pankowski's work confirms that she intuitively understands the fractal concept that, in her words, the natural world is "fluid and ordered as well."

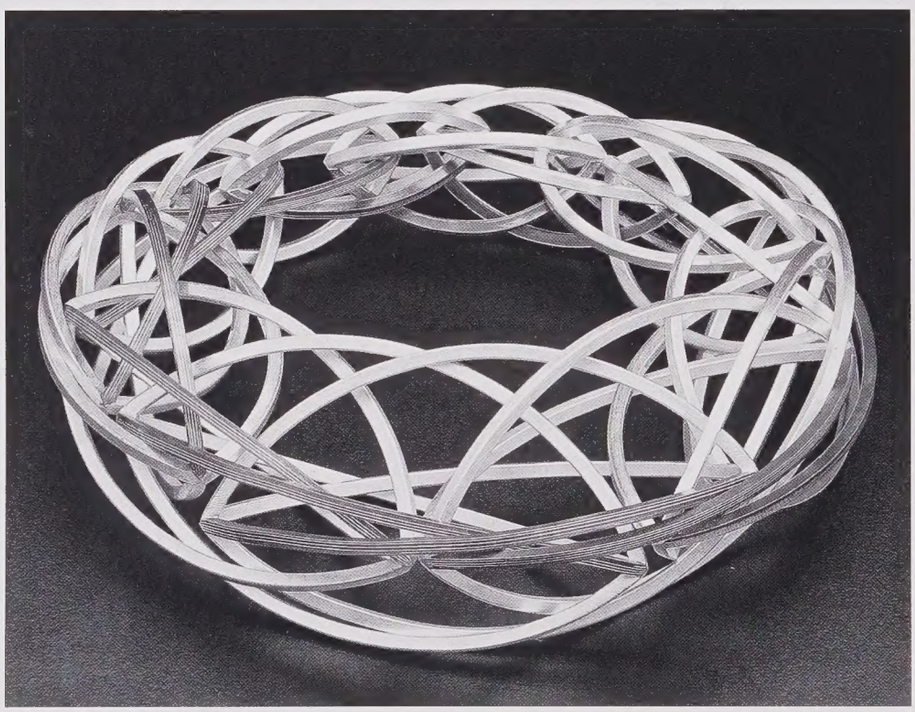
Fractal science (part of the larger discipline of chaos theory) inverts the traditional view of natural systems. Conventional science assumes that structures are symmetrical, that systems change according to predictable, linear patterns, or maintain their equilibrium. This vision often dictates that science ignore instances of systemic irregularity (e.g., a water stream's tendency to suddenly spray or divide; the wobbly areas in a planet's otherwise elliptical orbit). Fractal scientists and chaologists, in contrast, operate from the assumption that natural systems are *necessarily* nonlinear, dynamic, and disordered. These researchers use unpredictability as a key to understanding systems: Why does water suddenly burst into spray for a few seconds, then return to a regularly flowing stream? Why does a small weather shift in one part of the country generate a huge storm 900 miles away? A cardiologist reversed the conventional wisdom about the danger of heart arrhythmia. His studies show that a background level of arrhythmia is normal to heart function, and heart attacks occur when heart action loses its "background chaos."[4] Such intertwining of order and disorder is characteristic of "fractal" systems (cellular structure, plants, the human body, geological formations, etc.). The term also names a principle of randomness within such a system, as well as the mathematical and computer analyses that capture such patterns in equations or computer images.

Fractal science and chaos theory are vast fields whose general characteristics can only be briefly



*Sphere Necklace*, 2000
18k gold, sterling silver
length 22"
Photo: Doug Yaple

summarized here. What is key, however, is that both have added emotional dimensions to scientific understanding. Fractal principles are powerful tools for imagining the world as a tightly knit set of systems whose patterns reflect one another: a type of disorder that appears, for example, in a plant may also reappear in a geological formation or in the human body. Fractal scientists express an excitement, a spiritual wonder and awe in visualizing a reflectaphoric, universal arena of flux whose diversity is bound together because of similarities in randomized structure and process.[5] They are also keenly aware that such a vision creates an aesthetic pleasure. Since conventional science so aggressively maintains a veneer of disinterested objectivity, fractal scientists' most revolutionary gesture is to acknowledge that aesthetic awareness directly feeds scientific methodology. As one of the founders of chaos theory, mathematician Benoit Mandelbrot, says, his team's computer graphics of chaotic systems "did more than inform. They made people dream."[6]



*Lattis Bracelet #19*, 1994
sterling silver, *mokumé-gane*
diameter 5"
Photo: Doug Yaple

Pankowski shares this excitement. "You look at a slide of an onion skin and then you see the tile of an arch in a traffic tunnel. Where did we learn that structural strength [that] we can create with brick? That's in the natural world.... [We] grow from the microscopic world. We're extensions of what exists already," just as there is a connection between bridges, "diatoms and all those spiky shapes and architecture." *Orbit Ring #5* expresses this sensibility. We might look through a microscope and see bacteria or one-celled plants reproducing themselves as such a strand of beads. The ring also spins around the finger "like moons orbiting around the hand," as Pankowski says.

If we hold all these images in our minds at once, we understand that molecular structure is as complex as a planetary system. Pankowski links this to "Mikromegas," the title Otto Künzli chose for his recent invitational exhibition of stickpins. The term invokes the relativity of microcosm and macrocosm. For Künzli, stickpins are "a little riddle of the universe at the end of a thin piece of wire."[7] Fractal scientists would describe the "riddle" as the concept of "scaling"—the degree of complexity remains constant at any scale within a system. The notion that complexity transcends size, that atoms are as complex as galaxies, sits at the heart of fractal science's "worlds within worlds" perspective.

"Because of this ability to intimate worlds within worlds, art has always been fractal," Briggs affirms. "The science of chaos is helping to newly define an aesthetic that has always lain beneath the changing artistic ideas of different periods, cultures, and schools."[8] Art, too, has a hand in forcing paradigms to shift. Pankowski refers to her work as "instruments of the imagination." They are devices that enable us to grasp patterns common to many domains and scales of the empirical world. With this in mind, we can understand why Pankowski classifies her work into three general categories: the long chains and bracelets; the *Vortex* series; and, her newest work, the instruments and toylike rings. These categories represent not different jewelry forms, but three distinct perceptual orientations to phenomena.

We see one perspective at work in the aforementioned *Lattis Bracelet #19*, one of a series of pieces named for Bravias Lattis, a mathematician who created a formula for counting the points in crystalline structures. "I'm fascinated with what you can do with math-to-map reality in a certain way," Pankowski says.

While mathematics uses abstract symbols, the artist adds, "I want to make it visible; I want to make it real." *Lattis Burst Choker* evokes the crystal reference very clearly. As the piece hugs the sides of the neck, the elements "grow" in predictable alignment along an axis. Then the necklace bursts outward into crystalline shards, like one might see in a geological museum.

Pankowski refers to such work as "three-dimensional drawing." The *Lattis* forms convert the abstract language of mathematics into a concrete language of objects, though to understand how, we must reconsider the static images conjured by the terms "crystal" and "drawing." Just as computer imaging visualizes fractal geometry's equations for systems made dynamic by disorder and order, Pankowski's three-dimensional drawing must be understood as a *verb* phrase. *Lattis Bracelet* torques about the wrist, the relationships between individual elements constantly shifting. *Lattis Burst Choker* seems to collapse as if smashed when it is lowered down onto a surface and the elements move out of alignment. Then the random cluster reorganizes itself when drawn up again. The crystal lattis occupies the liminal space between movement and stasis, order and disorder. From this perspective, Pankowski's "three-dimensional drawings" might be better described as video clips that draw the viewer and handler into a fractal spectacle and experience of "all the little cells that go into building ... complete form." The long chains enact the dynamic growth of structure, whether that be the interior structure of an imaginary crystal or a perfectly shaped airplane wing.

Far from an incidental element of Pankowski's designs, such dynamism expresses a crucial aspect of her work. She theorizes this through "flow," a term she discovered in an article about handcrafting. In her words, flow describes a "state of consciousness ... where you lose track of time"; she experiences this meditative state while making her repetitive forms. However, Pankowski asserts that she also builds flow into her designs—through directional alignment of elements; by adding a dark line for visual continuity; or by eliminating conventional clasps that interrupt the smooth movement of the viewer's eye. In addition, Pankowski creates her pieces to flow over the body: it is key that the wearer is "physically moving it, changing the shape."

In her words, flow describes a "state of consciousness ... where you lose track of time"; she experiences this meditative state while making her repetitive forms.

*Lattis Burst Choker*, 1998
sterling silver
length 20"; greatest depth 2"
Photo: Doug Yaple

"Flow" is thus a phenomenological term that links the psychic state of the maker to the design of the form and, finally, to the experience of a wearer or viewer. This layered experience of fluidity connects back to her fractal sensibility, as becomes clear in her *Vortex* forms, inspired by Milton Van Dyke's *An Album of Fluid Motion*, a photographic study of fluid dynamics that documents the movement of liquids and gases around objects of various shapes. Fluid motion is quintessentially chaotic: cigarette smoke winds upward in a tight, looping vortex, then unexpectedly randomizes into multiple plumes;

*Vortex Pendant #4*, 2001
sterling silver, 14k gold, clear borosilicate glass, carnelian, sterling silver neck cable
length 3 1/4"
Photo: Doug Yaple

the airstream behind a triangular wing is organized in cones of variably patterned turbulence.[9] Pankowski interprets these phenomena with a necklace such as *Vortex #2*, where structured elements alternate with sinuous, curving forms. The *Vortex* pieces explicitly study "the boundaries of perception, what affects what happens around a form"; the curved elements represent the movement of the fluid or airstream, whereas the geometrical shapes invoke the solid form that determines the flow's shape. In *Vortex Pendant #4*, the references are intriguingly ambiguous. The fluid is rendered in borosilicate glass, directly connected to the interlocked silver rings suspending it from its chain. Perhaps the silver structure leaves this specific, curving fluid trail; or perhaps the four carnelian beads suggest that the silver forms represent yet another form of turbulence, as blood splashes in a heart chamber.

For Pankowski, jewelry objects offer "lessons from things," a phrase which she adopted from the French *leçons des choses*—a series of posters for children showing, for example, a cow, grass, a dairy, and chunk of cheese. The *Vortex* series of "things" uses multiple notions of flow to teach fundamental lessons about structure and process. The repetitive forms recall the maker's meditative state; they also translate the movement of gas or fluid—something invisible—into a concrete form; the design carries our eye in an uninterrupted flow around the form; the form brings this motion to our bodies so we feel it as a necklace flows freely over the skin, exciting our sense of touch as might the wind or a stream of water dripping from a mountainside. And—if we allow our imaginations to flow as well—these instrument-things teach lessons about patterns of fluid motion that occur in blood, air, smoke, oceans, the jet stream, and the molten surface of the sun. The fractal lesson carries us to a spiritual awareness of the unity-in-motion of the physical world.

Pankowski's work also carries us to a place where jewelry objects sit at the boundary between scientifically motivated and aesthetic perception. If linking aesthetics and science is radical, it is even more so to claim that a jewelry

*Vortex #2*, 2000
sterling silver and copper *mokumé-gane*, sterling silver
length 39"
Photo: Doug Yaple

object functions as an epistemological device—a tool for creating knowledge. Pankowski's work clearly performs this function, but the radical element of the statement hinges on the cultural status of touch.

There is no word in English for a person who simultaneously sees and touches an object in order to gain knowledge about it. This gap in language is a result of Western metaphysics, which hierarchizes the senses according to the mind-body split: vision and touch occupy opposite sides of the divide. Vision feeds the mind with information, whereas touch is more "primitive," even animal, because it is inescapably connected with the physical body. It provides no relevant input to the search for knowledge.[10] Given this context, it is no surprise that we lack

a word to link vision and touch, even though the two modes of sensory processing often must occur simultaneously, providing us with a blended experience of a material thing. Controlled by well-entrenched paradigms, our language is not designed to acknowledge or legitimize what the mind-body split defines as a contamination of knowledge by corporeality.

Pankowski suggests the word "player" to describe this bisensory approach. Tactile interaction with her pieces is essential to their impact, especially in her recent work, the instruments and rings. In these objects Pankowski says she "condenses" the perspective used in her larger pieces. Whereas the long chains make powerful visual statements and can transform the wearer's self-presentation in social spaces, the small *Instrument Pendant #7*, for example, has a sliding element that attracts the hands and narrows the wearer's focus to the tiny object itself. *Orbit Ring #4* joins two fingers with a sliding mechanism and becomes an instrument for exploring the digits' relative motion. The object's small scale not only insures that the wearer "interact with it in a private manner," but it feeds a conceptual condensation as well. Unlike the complex dynamics of the *Lattis* and *Vortex* pieces, the *Instruments* simplify form and reduce kinetics to a single action of spinning or sliding. Pankowski reports, "People say, 'I couldn't wear that, I'd play with it all the time.' I say, 'That's okay, it's like worry beads.'" These small pieces seduce the wearer-as-player with repetitive motions that induce a meditative state of flow.

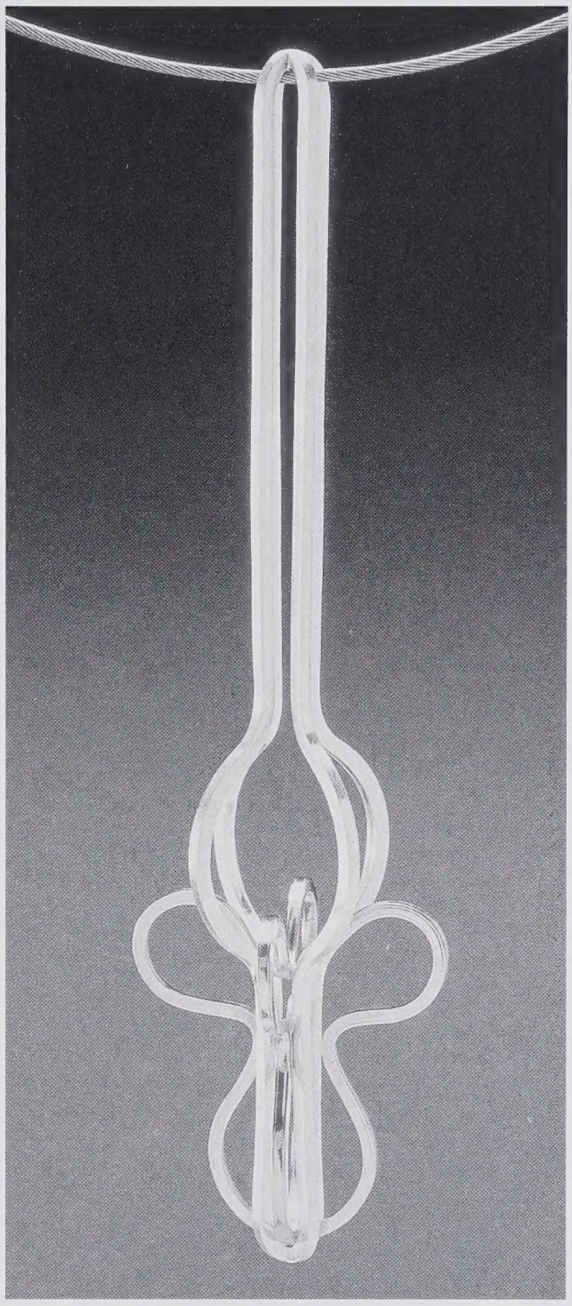
*Orbit Flower Ring #1*, 2000
18k gold, 14k white gold, glass, diamond
length 1 5/8"
Photo: Doug Yaple

Part of what the mind follows in its timeless wanderings are the associations invoked by these reflectaphoric objects. With their clean lines and sliding parts, the instruments recall laboratory equipment, medical apparatuses, musical instruments, or toys, suggests Pankowski. The loops of *Orbit Flower Ring #1* evoke a floral form, but also a stack of turbulence patterns created by finger, glass, and diamond. The *Orbit* series of pendants and rings uses baroque pearls; Pankowski is attracted to them because their doublet or triplet bodies are irregular "mistakes" which she explores by "blowing them up, doing a three-dimensional drawing" around the form—perhaps tracing a planet's gravitational field, liquid eddying around an irregular object; or a spider hanging in its web. The instruments and rings lead us from microcosm to macrocosm and back again.

Conventional science has claimed its freedom from emotional or aesthetic concerns, anything that might entangle it with the object and threaten the objective distance needed to master its knowledge intellectually. This assertion emerges from the same conceptual framework that robs us of a single word for seeing and touching, denying that we might acquire legitimate knowledge from sources beyond intellect and reason. However, mathematician Michael Polanyi reveals an unacknowledged truth about scientific and theoretical activity: in conventional math and the physical sciences alike, "the affirmation of a great ... theory is in part an expression of delight. The theory has an inarticulate component acclaiming its beauty,

and this is essential to the belief that the theory is true."[11] Polanyi's observation confirms what chaos theory formalizes: that scientific truth is not pure and objective, but motivated and influenced by many value systems, including aesthetic criteria—whether they be classical values of harmony, balance, and the Golden Mean, or postmodern notions of non-linearity disruption, and chaotic randomness.

If aesthetic feeling confirms the intellect's grasping of the world, then intellectual labor is integral to aesthetic creation. This takes a particular form for artists sensitive to fractal paradigms. John Briggs observes that such artists do not represent nature, but rather use processes that underlie the appearance of forms of nature. Their creations are "like" life forms because they themselves display the features of dynamic systems.[12] Gina Pankowski's instruments of the fractal imagination function as the most intimate of epistemological devices. Her three-dimensional drawings map reality in forms that oscillate between order and disorder. They splinter our imaginations' focus between multiple phenomena, and lead us on trips from the impossibly small to the infinitely large. They teach our eyes, hands, and minds to layer and know the many realities of a world bound by order in flux. ■



*Instrument Pendant #7*, 2000
18k gold, sterling silver
length 4"
Photo: Doug Yaple

**Tacey A. Rosolowski** is a writer who resides in Utica, New York.

1 All artist's quotations are taken from interviews conducted with the author between November 2, 2000, and April 27, 2002.
2 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, trans. J.M. Edie (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 181.
3 John Briggs, *Fractals: The Patterns of Chaos* (New York: Touchstone Books, 1992), p. 174.
4 Ibid., p. 126.
5 Several useful books use artwork to introduce the layperson to fractal concepts. In addition to Briggs's *Fractals: The Patterns of Chaos*, Michael McGuire's *An Eye For Fractals: A Graphic and Photographic Essay* (Redwood City, CA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1991) is particularly instructive. McGuire reveals the fractal principles at work in the typical subjects of nature photography (e.g., patterns of leaves, rock formations, oceanscapes). McGuire defines concepts such as "iterability" (how a complex form emerges through repetition of a basic unit), and "self-similarity" (the notion that an object has the same appearance at different scales; broccoli is a mundane example, with its tiny florets miniature versions of the entire head's system of branching). Of particular interest to artists, this book includes graphics that demonstrate how to produce fractal images of many degrees of complexity. McGuire's aim throughout is to generate a symbiosis between mathematical and aesthetic forms of understanding. Ron Eglash's *African Fractals: Modern Computing and Indigenous Design* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999) takes a similar approach, with a cross-cultural twist.
6 See Mandelbrot's introduction to Michael McGuire, *An Eye For Fractals*.
7 "Mikromegas," *American Craft*, vol. 62, no. 2 (April/May 2002), pp. 68-71. The exhibition title is a reference to *Micromegas* (1752), a satirical novel by Voltaire that explores the relativity of dimensions–the "small-large," as the Greek terms indicate.
8 John Briggs, *The Patterns of Chaos*, p. 28.
9 *An Album of Fluid Motion*, ed. Milton Von Dyke (Stanford, CA: The Parabolic Press, 1982). The images referred to are on pp. 63 and 75, respectively.
10 Western thought has hierarchized the senses. Vision occupies the highest position, because the seeing subject gathers knowledge about an object across a distance; vision is linked to the cognitive state of objective distance and the subject's mastery of a passive object. Following the same logic, hearing, by giving the mind access to language, takes a close second place to sight. In contrast, taste, touch, and smell require close contact--a metaphor for subjective and even animalistic entanglement with an object. Inextricably linked to *the body*, these senses lack the power to process information and produce legitimate knowledge. Such assumptions feed the art-craft antagonism. Art, consumed visually, is defined through its appeal to conceptual understanding. Craft celebrates manual process; it is experienced through touch and "contaminated" (from the perspective of mainstream art critical categories) by its profound connection to the body. For further reading on the history of vision's place in Western epistemology (and the influence of such paradigms on language), see Bruno Snell, *The Discovery of the Mind: The Greek Origins of European Thought*, trans. T.G. Rosenmeyer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953).
11 Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1958), p. 133.
12 John Briggs, *The Patterns of Chaos*, p. 30.

Kristero Alexandra Milano
*Spaghetti Twirling Forks*, 1995
sterling silver
8 x 1 1/4 x 1/2"

# Fork Lifting

by Anne Barros

The fork that lays to the left of the dinner plate has a rich past, not often enough considered when twirling spaghetti around its tines. Functionally it fills the need to spear and pick up food. Its antecedents were probably the stick and skewer used for cooking over an open fire. Successive ages have decorated and interpreted the fork according to varying views of morality, beauty and manners.

It is believed that the ancient Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans used large forks in ritual ceremonies and also for cooking. The ruins of Pompeii and Herculaneum also revealed small silver forks. Some museum collections hold late Roman cast bronze forks, usually with three tines, though here it should be noted that the number of tines is not necessarily an indication of a fork's age. Similarly, recalling a Gallo-Roman fork found with a physician's instruments near Paris, it is difficult to determine usage from these rare excavation finds.

In the Middle East, the fork has been used for eating from perhaps the seventh century on. A very beautiful bronze fork of about the sixth century, probably from Persia, has a long twisted handle topped with a human figure, its finely sculpted shoulders attached to the two tapered tines. The length (over seven inches) of this Byzantine fork suggests it was used for cooking or serving.

In the West, however, the fork stayed mainly in the kitchen until a Byzantine princess in the early eleventh century returned it to the table—much to the astonishment of the Venetians. Married to Doge Orseo II, the princess, according to the story, did not eat with her fingers like everyone else, but had her meat cut up into pieces by her eunuch. She then ate with a small two-pronged gold fork. Even the sophisticated Venetians were shocked, and the church denounced the fork as an instrument of the devil (referring to Satan's portrayal with a pitchfork). It seemed unnatural to use a metal instrument when God gave one fingers to eat with. This association of forks with depravity would last for centuries.

In medieval iconography, forks were not seen on tables, but they were described in inventories like that of King Charles V of France in 1379. The accepted medieval custom was to carry your own small knife and perhaps spoon with you in a leather or embroidered case. These utensils were elaborately decorated as befit your social position. If you did not bring your own, you used the

Francesco and Raffaello Botticini, *Banquet of Herod*, 1484-91 (detail) Museo della Collegiata di S. Andrea, Empoli, Italy

common spoon, then wiped it with your napkin and passed it on. Your knife was to spear or cut off a piece of meat to bring to your trencher (a four-day-old oblong of bread that absorbed any juices and was then given to the dogs or others less fortunate). From the trencher, your fingers brought food to your mouth. This necessitated a lot of handwashing; hence the numerous ewer-and-bowl sets in museums today.

"The Italians . . . always serve their food with a little fork. . . . Everyone who touches the meat with his fingers transgresses the rule of civility . . . . The forks are made of iron or pewter, the nobility have them sometimes in silver."

Tracing the history of the fork through paintings shows that in the fifteenth century it continued to be a symbol of the dissolute life. For example, two panels (1484–91) by Italian painters Francesco and Raffaello Botticini on the praedella of the *Tabernacolo del Sacramento* in the Tuscan town of Empoli make interesting moral contrasts. On one side is the Last Supper with its sober table, few plates, and no forks. On the other is the banquet of Herod, where the head of John the Baptist is being presented to a table of very rich banqueters. Here the tablecloth is ornately embroidered and each diner has his or her own trencher, *ecuelle* (squat tureen similar to a porringer), knife, and gold fork. The guests do not face each other, but view a tiered display of silverware, as was the medieval custom. The panel would have symbolized decadence to the congregation, which would have seen forks as useless luxuries.

The fork is noticeably absent from the bourgeois-style table of Basel goldsmith Hans Hug Kluber, as painted in 1559. The table is set with wood trenchers and fine silver drinking vessels; one would expect that if forks were in fashion, they would be present. Although it has been said that some silversmiths made forks, but never ate with them, it is likely they were not yet commonly used in Switzerland. It is also

Mathieu Le Nain,
*The Family Dinner*, ca. 1645-48
oil on canvas
32 1/2 x 43"
Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

possible that Protestants were slower to accept the fork because of its association with things Italian and Papist.

Only in late Renaissance Italy was the fork routinely depicted, although it was probably accepted there much earlier. Paolo Veronese painted an extremely large rendition of the marriage feast of Cana for the refectory of a Benedictine monastery in 1562-63. This *Noces de Cana* has been called the first modern banquet, because in this brilliant princely scene each diner has his or her own place setting of napkin and fork. It is the dessert course, and a gentleman diner twirls his fork on a plate; a woman places her fork delicately in her mouth.

In the early 1600s, well-known British traveler Thomas Coryat confirmed that the fork was no longer a symbol of perdition in Italy, when he recorded that "all the Italian cities that I have visited have a custom that is hardly in use in other nations of Christianity. The Italians . . . always serve their food with a little fork . . . . Everyone who touches the meat with his fingers transgresses the rule of civility . . . . The forks are made of iron or pewter, the nobility have them sometimes in silver."[1]

Myth has it that the fork traveled from Italy to France in 1533 with Catherine de Medici, who at the age of fourteen "arrived to marry Henry II accompanied by a train of attendants, perfumers, fireworks manufacturers, embroiderers, cooks, pastry cooks, confectioners, and distillers. Her pack animals carried to France for the first time: parsley, artichokes, lettuces, forks, glazed earthenware plates."[2] It is more likely that there had been exchanges of ideas and people between Italy and the rest of Europe for some time, but the fork did not easily gain acceptance outside Italy. It was still portrayed as an object of luxury and ostentation in northern European painting in such works as Henrick van Balen and Jan Breughel's 1616 *l'Hiver*. Here it is associated with sensuality and promiscuity, as a buxom woman prominently displays her small gold fork while

she dines on oysters with an elderly gentleman. In France, the first known representation of the individual place setting did not occur until the 1640s. In *The Family Dinner* by Le Nain, the knife, fork, and spoon are pictured together to the right of the plate. As was the European custom, the spoon and fork are turned downward with their engravings visible on the back. Six hundred years after the Church in Venice denounced its use, the fork was now seen as recommending the morals of the time: a reverence for and distance from the food. After being associated with luxury and sensuality, the fork is now found on the table of people of the highest moral rigor. An early eighteenth-century French book on manners later confirmed this: "It is absolutely against civility to touch the meats and even worse the potage with the fingers. It is necessary to use your fork to bring the meat to your plate."[3]

The French court began to incorporate forks with the place setting during the reign of Louis XIV, although the king himself is said never to have eaten with one. In 1680, eight dozen spoons and forks, along with three dozen knives and other basins, ewers, candlesticks, casters, and salvers, were ordered in sterling silver for the dauphin from goldsmith Nicolas Delaunay. Unfortunately, this tableware was soon melted down in one of the many sumptuary declarations designed to return silver to the state as bullion.

The French silver trade was highly structured, and so a specialized workshop probably made the dauphin's cutlery. Sets of matching knives and forks, often with elaborate ivory or inlaid handles, were often given as wedding gifts. These had straight steel tines and blades, and the fork's two tines followed the design of the knife, because it was mostly used to hold meat while cutting. But by the late 1600s, as forks became more common, they began to be made completely of silver, and followed the design of the spoon with its curving handle and angled bowl. Soon three and four curved tines became the norm, and the fork functioned well both as a scoop for vegetables and for spearing meat. Fork handles could be held between the thumb and forefingers like spoons, rather than clutched with a fist like knives.

With the opening of porcelain factories in Europe in the early 1700s, the porcelain plate replaced the bread trencher, and joined with the napkin and matching knife, fork, and spoon to form a *couvert* or place setting. This changed the atmosphere of the dining table. It appeared more unified, with matching sets of plates and flatware. Socially, each diner had a personal space and control of his or her own plate. Whereas in the past, one enjoyed the intimacy of having a fellow guest (preferably one with well-washed hands) pull a morsel from the stew pot for a neighbor, the new place setting affirmed the sense of individualism that would be the hallmark of a more modern era.

The new era was also marked by the philosophy

*Byzantine Fork*, ca. 6th century
bronze
length 11 1/4"
The Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths, London

*Knife and Fork*, ca. 1690
steel, silver, ivory
length 9"
The Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths, London

Jiro J. Masuda
*Hybrid Flatware: Vice Grips*, 1996
steel, silver, found objects
fork: 10 1/4 x 1 x 1 1/2"
knife: 10 3/4 x 1 1/2 x 5"
spoon: 9 1/2 x 1 1/2 x 1 1/4"

Boris Bally
*Construction Serving Set*, 1998
silver, brass
truss loader: 2 x 2 3/4 x 16 1/4"
beam backhoe: 2 x 2 1/8 x 14 1/4"
Photo: Aaron Usher III

Rebecca Scheer
*Futensils: Dinner Fork*, 2000
forged sterling silver, rubies
length 8"

of René Descartes, with his belief in reason and distrust of the senses. Advances in chemistry and physiology promoted scientific rationalism and replaced the theory of humors, in which temperaments were thought to be modified by the intake of various types and temperatures of foods. In the kitchen a repertoire of techniques and rules became established that still forms the basis of French cuisine. In the geometric, formal *potager* at Versailles, foods from the New World were introduced, and food commanded a new respect. Still-life paintings of vegetables and fruits illustrated the changed sensibility. Instead of the medieval masking of the individual flavor of a food with spices, a *nouvelle cuisine* developed in France. Delicate sauces became the jewel in the crown of this cuisine, and they would have been awkward to eat with spoons and knives only. As a nineteenth-century historian noted, the adoption of the fork coincided with real progress in the art of cuisine.[4]

The civilizing role of cutlery was stressed by nannies; and later interpreted sexually by anthropologists who saw the knife as masculine, the spoon feminine, and the fork ambiguous or Oedipal.

It was not until the nineteenth century that forks were universally used in the West. Their slow acceptance is charmingly depicted in a seventeenth-century faience plate in the Museo Castello Sforzesco in Milan. Two gentlemen are shown dining with a lady. The men still use their napkins over their arms and eat with their fingers, while the lady at center uses a fork. Many men considered the fork an effeminate, effete instrument; only when a fashion for long lace cuffs took hold did some supposedly adopt its use. In rural parts of Europe where a meal was ordinarily composed of bread, soup, and perhaps some lard, there was no need for a fork. In North America, silver collections from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries show that colonists had few forks. Then on the Victorian table they multiplied. The concept of the proper utensil for each item of food expanded the place setting to

include fish forks, salad forks, ice cream forks, and cake forks—mostly factory-cut and stamped from bar stock. Manners still played an important role, and knowing which fork to use was the sign of the educated person. The civilizing role of cutlery was stressed by nannies; and later interpreted sexually by anthropologists who saw the knife as masculine, the spoon feminine, and the fork ambiguous or Oedipal. The basic shape of the fork, however, had not really altered from Roman times. It still consisted of two, three, or four tines set above a handle. Embellishment followed the style of the period, and even today most silver flatware is based on traditional designs.

There are, however, contemporary metalsmiths more in sync with René Magritte and Surrealism than nineteenth-century pattern books. Magritte's 1951 painting, *The Magician*, depicts a three-handed man at the dinner table. He cuts his meat with a knife in his right hand and fork in his left, while simultaneously bringing bread to his mouth with another left hand. The centuries-old symbolism, language, and function of our everyday tools for eating definitely influence certain makers of flatware. They are interested not only in the meaning of familiar items of our material culture, but in broader issues of food supply and consumption. Wry humor is often the result.

At the Millennium Canteen Exhibition in Sheffield, England, long a center of cutlery production, Howard Fenn's fish fork reminded one of trying to hold onto a fish. The handle was articulated with gold pins and silicon rubber between hollow silver elements that wriggled as you grasped them—a call to remember the fish's life before it became dinner.

In the United States, contemporary metalsmith Kristoró Alexandra Milano has redesigned the fork with curvy tines, the better to twirl spaghetti. Boris Bally has played with the forklift and shovel aspect of tableware in his constructed serving pieces. And Jiro Masuda employed vice grips as flatware handles to suggest the moral ramifications of eating.

For her masters' thesis at the Oregon School of Craft, Rebecca Scheer deconstructed knives, forks, and spoons to "call attention to the invisible process of their construction and to the maker's investment of skill, labor and intellect." The tines of the forks of her forged *Futensils* (2000) are articulated with hinges so they flap and cannot function. Acknowledging Surrealist thinking and Jacques Derrida's theory of opposition, Scheer, like many other craft-based artists today, makes objects that express both utility and uselessness and decry art's rejection of function for idea. Forks are signifiers of have and have not, civilized and uncivilized, abundance, and (in the case of the restaurant guide symbols), overabundance.

Since its appearance on Western tables a thousand years ago, the fork has carried more than its share of moral baggage. Medieval Christians rejected it as a symbol of the Devil and decadence. Seventeenth-century rationalist philosophy enabled its acceptance as a useful tool among upright people. Today, influenced by our world, and art and craft theory, the fork has been deconstructed to challenge our views on consumption and our unthinking use of domestic objects. As a silversmith who makes forks, I often wonder about the historical links between makers of forks. Did the medieval goldsmith wince when asked to make an object his church declared immoral? While handpolishing tines with rouge and leather in an atelier in Paris, did the seventeenth-century silversmith think of the fork's use by courtiers at the groaning boards of Versailles? Certainly many of today's makers brood over the production of luxury eating utensils when much of the world does not have enough food to eat; that is why their forks offer eloquent commentary about life, craft, and consumption. ■

**Anne Barros** is author of *Ornament and Object: Canadian Jewellery and Metal Art 1946-1996*. Her research on the fork was supported by a grant from the Canada Council for the Arts.

1 Thomas Coryat, *Crudities Hastily Gobled up in Five Months Travells* (1611) (Glasgow: MacLehose, 1905), p. 236.

2 Barbara Ketcham Wheaton, *Savoring the Past* (New York: Scribner, 1983), p. 43.

3 Jean-Baptiste de La Salle, Les règles de la bienséance et de la société..., quoted in Zeev Gouarier, *Arts et manières de table*, (Thionville: G. Klopp, 1994), p. 118.

4 Alfred Franklin, *La vie privée*, (Paris: Plon, 1888), 7, p. 3.

## "LIV BLAVARP: JEWELRY 1984-2001"

OXOXO, BALTIMORE, MARYLAND
FEBRUARY 8–MARCH 14, 2002

by SUSAN ISAACS

**top**
*Necklace*, 1993
dyed sycamore and painted birch with gold leaf

**above**
*Hatshepsut*, 2000
dyed and lacquered birch

Liv Blavarp's retrospective show demonstrates her longtime interest in jewelry, specifically carved wooden neckpieces. Blavarp, who has also taken on large commissions for interior spaces, creates work that is rooted in her native Norwegian tradition, though is influenced by world art, especially that of Africa. Her pieces have the finished and elegant surfaces and workmanship of modern Scandinavian furniture.

An excellent hardback book with text by Marjorie Simon and Gunnar Sorensen accompanies the exhibition, and gives those viewers who might not be familiar with Blavarp's work an overview of the artist's career. While these handsome neckpieces exemplify the Scandinavian tradition of fine woodworking, they also allude to a primitive past of elaborately decorated Viking sailing vessels. Beautifully constructed and sophisticated in design, they also demonstrate a love of wooden toys, as well as a knowledge of historical jewelry, especially ancient Egyptian breast plates and more contemporary African neckwear.

Blavarp uses dyes and paints to color her pieces, and often adds exotic materials such as ebony, ivory, and whale tooth for accent. This show also includes several bracelets that relate to the large but elegant neckwear; however, it is her necklaces that constitute the central focus of the exhibition. Her forms are organic and often refer to animals; in at least one instance a piece is designed to look like a coiled snake.

Like so much contemporary jewelry, the necklaces are large and sculptural. They would probably not be very practical for wear by anyone short or small, but the scale allows artists like Blavarp room to make aesthetic statements. Her pieces fit within the vocabulary of large, wearable art. *Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day* and *Venus* even suggest turtleneck sweaters, or the high neckpieces popular among wealthy women in the early twentieth century. They would also work as framed displays, and operate as well in the realm of sculpture as jewelry.

However, Blavarp's wearable *objets d'art* are made of wood rather than precious metals. *Miss Western's Chang-Chang Necklace* further attests to Blavarp's interest in the art of non-Western cultures, as well as a general fascination with folk art. Its red color suggests mid-twentieth century wooden toys, as well as Chinese carved and lacquered artifacts. Its form, crafted of lacquered birch and cocolola musical "keys" strung together, recalls the pectoral necklaces of ancient Egypt. However, its smooth surfaces and elegant craftsmanship are decidedly Scandinavian modern.

Today, artists have the luxury and the right to cull their ideas from many sources, past and present. Blavarp clearly creates with a postmodern vocabulary of multiculturalism and historical appropriation. One handsome piece, named *Hatshepsut* after the famous Egyptian pharaoh, is a large orange and gold collar made of dyed and lacquered birch wood. Like so many of the pieces, *Hatshepsut* demonstrates the organic nature of Blavarp's designs and represents her self-conscious historicisms.

The challenge for artists working in this rich world culture is to organize their sources into work that is aesthetically interesting without being too literally borrowed; they must find a way to arrange their appropriations into an aesthetic whole. This Blavarp does well. Even with all of her allusions to other cultures and other times, the overwhelming impact upon first viewing her work is that of the contemporary world and of a decidedly Scandinavian design aesthetic. It is only after reflection and deconstruction that the viewer begins to discover all of the sources, which have been integrated into the whole.

Some of Blavarp's pieces also demonstrate another chief characteristic of postmodernism: irony. A compliment to her self-conscious cultural and historical borrowings, the artist's sense of whimsy emerges in the toylike nature of some of the works; necklaces seem to slink and move like carved children's toys, and reference tropical animals, birds, and plants. Some pieces, like her elegant dyed sycamore, painted birch, and gold-leaf necklace, would nonetheless be terrific adornment for a beach party. This show aptly illustrates the range of her approaches to the theme of the decorated neckpiece, from wit, to national identity, to historical appropriation.

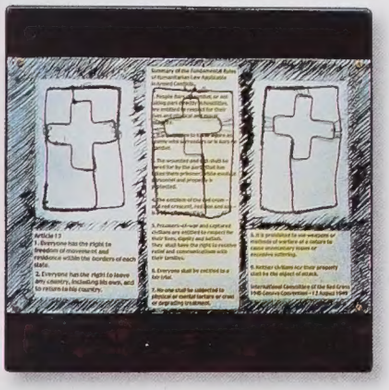
**Susan Isaacs** is associate professor of art history at Towson University, Maryland, and consulting curator at the Delaware Center for the Contemporary Arts, Wilmington.

## "METAL UNDER GLASS"

SOUTHWEST MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY
ART & DESIGN GALLERY, SPRINGFIELD
MARCH 23–APRIL 2, 2002

NATIONAL ORNAMENTAL METAL MUSEUM,
MEMPHIS, TN
APRIL 28–JULY 7, 2002

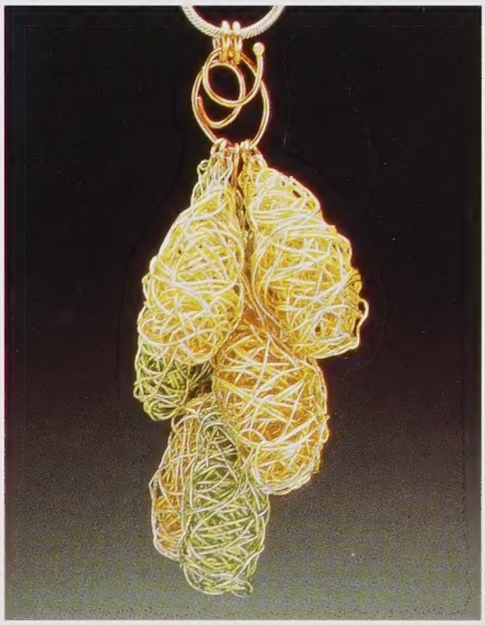
by GLEN R. BROWN



Responsive to the persuasion that practicality exerts over size, traditional enamel work is given to intimacy and even preciousness, a more controversial corollary in the psychology of scale. The jewel-like lucidity of enamel and its capacity for buoyant color tend to reinforce its stereotypes as decorative as well as diminutive and obsessively refined in execution. Although decoration and mastery of technique have never been liabilities in jewelry and metals, there is ample evidence of a desire in recent enameling to transcend traditional conceptions of the medium, to abandon the purely decorative and technically proficient in pursuit of less exhausted possibilities. The diversity of strategies for doing so is effectively demonstrated by "Metal Under Glass."

Curated by Sarah Perkins, herself an innovator in enamel, the exhibition is large enough (comprising nearly 100 pieces) to dispel a narrow view of contemporary practice, despite its omission of tendentiously decorative work. Included are requisite enamel greats such as Jamie Bennett, but also some whose work is less well known. The forms encompassed—vessels, wall pieces, freestanding sculpture, and jewelry—are those frequently encountered in contemporary enamel, although the proportion of jewelry (about 50 percent) is probably lower than in actual practice. The exhibition's strength, however, is not its comprehensive representation of the field but rather its concentration on what are clearly the most interesting tendencies in recent practice, especially those reflecting concern for the metal that in enamel work is often outshined by glass.

Metal's potential to be more than an unobtrusive site for enameling is perhaps most obvious in the vessels. Harlan Butt's incense burners, incorporating some of the rare figural elements in the show, are as much about three-dimensional form as translucent surface. Foil leaves drifting languidly through limpid enamel conjure the still waters of an autumn pond and, in concert with sculpted creatures and rings of text on the censer lids, evoke the cyclical nature of life. Linda Darty's *Garden Candlesticks #1* display a comparable balance between sculptural form and surface imagery and incite similar reflection on energies in nature. The most aggressive metal is clearly that of June Schwarcz's work. Constructed from sheet copper, scored, stitched with wire, and augmented through electroforming prior to enameling, Schwarcz's vessels reverse the glass-metal hierarchy.



Electroforming also serves to dispel this hierarchy in the libidinal organic forms of Maria Phillips. Mark Hartung's brooches equate glass and metal by subduing the gemlike effects of the former in favor of gleaming opacity. Drier surfaces diminish preciosity in Rebekah Laskin's brooches and in Marjorie Simon's *Red Tubes Necklace*, which incorporates scorching in implicit rejection of technical finesse. Barbara Seidenath's *Honeycomb* follows a different strategy, producing optical confusion by situating gems against indentically colored enamel; only the gold mounts separating the two confirm where one material ends and the other begins. Of the jewelry in the exhibition, however, Yoshiko Yamamoto's fragile, cocoonlike silver-wire beads coated in sifted enamel depart most radically from traditional expectations of the medium.

The enamel-on-steel wall pieces of Helen Elliott, Gretchen Goss, and Elizabeth Turrell all employ a small rectangular format, a limited range of color, and shallow compositional space. Elliott's white veils floating against black grounds are meditative, inspired by fleeting reflections in church windows. Goss's compositions, nearly monochromatic, reference forms in nature through organic contours and the flat patterning of Warhol prints. Turrell's work, incorporating excerpts from the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and imagery suggestive of wire mesh partly obscured by opaque panels, explores the boundaries between intimacy and confinement.

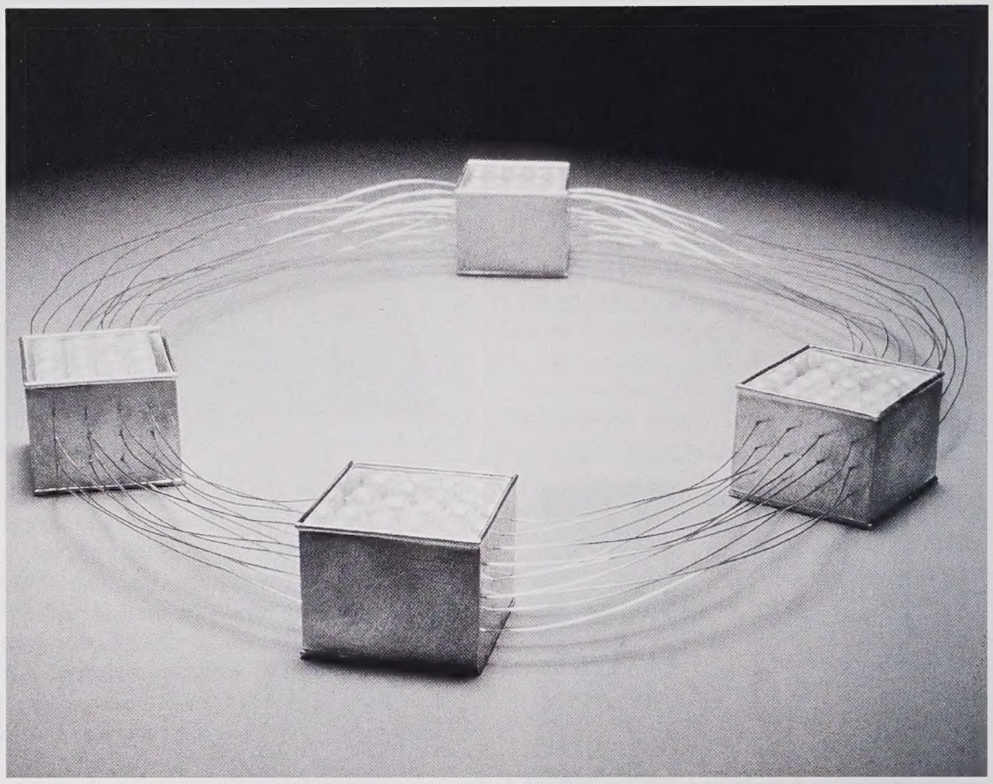
Of the sculptures, Sydney Scheer's silver, ebony, and enamel rattles are spiritual pendants to Butt's censers and Elliott's panels. Some of Deborah Lozier's works inhabit an ambiguous ground between the utility of objects such as teapots or oil cans (which tends to be negated) and the "useless beauty" of enameling. In Lozier's *Groove* and *Rut/Groove*, however, translucent enamel is made strange by the monumentality of minimalist copper forms. The most conceptual works—challenging enough to draw the tenor of the entire exhibition toward that of a manifesto—are clearly the sculptures of Susan Kingsley. *Nailfetish Necklace*, a string of red-enameled-copper fingernails on a velvet display neck, attaches a morbid note of the *vanitas* tradition to the preciosity of enamel. The most provocative work, however, is Kingsley's *Rx*. Consisting of five apothecary bottles filled with gel capsules of different colored enamel powder, the piece issues a challenge to the prescriptive influence of tradition over enamel practice—a challenge that, to varying degrees, is echoed in the works of the exhibition as a whole.

**Glen R. Brown** is associate professor of art history at Kansas State University.

**clockwise from top**
Susan Kingsley
*RX*, 2000
enamel, mixed media
4 1/2 x 10 x 3"

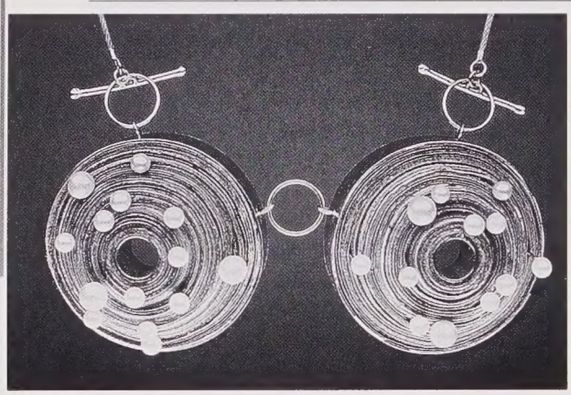
Yoshiko Yamamoto
*Beads Pendent #2*, 2001
silver, enamel, 18k gold

Elizabeth Turrell
*3 Steel Crosses*, 2001
enamel on steel, sgraffita decals, steel wire
12 x 12"



**"KIWON WANG:**
**ONE PLUS ONE IS ONE"**
E.A. DRAPER SHOWCASE, DELAWARE CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY ART, WILMINGTON
MARCH 1–MAY 26, 2002

by SANDRA L. TATMAN



**above**
*Marriage Series #2*, 2001
newspaper, pearl, 14k gold, steel cable
$2\,3/8 \times 2\,3/8 \times 1\,1/4$"

**above right**
*Meeting #7*, 2002
sterling silver, cultured pearl
$2 \times 2 \times 1\,1/4$"

East meets West; paper meets silver; throwaway meets precious; jewelry meets sculpture. In the concise space of the E.A. Draper Showcase gallery, Korean-born Kiwon Wang explores all of these encounters through provocative combinations of material and form: using pearls and newspaper, adding gold, diamonds, emeralds, pink tourmaline, and citrine to create new questions about the role of jewelry in the twenty-first century.

In her Marriage Series, Wang addresses the precious within a throwaway Western culture. *Marriage Series #2* is fabricated from tightly wound bands taken from *The New York Times*, with lustrous pearls and gold both controlling and decorating the continuous circle of newsprint. For Wang the pearl is doubly precious because its Eastern connotation carries the shape of the earth, an eternal and universal symbol. Here, however, it combines with scraps of disposable newsprint, a material that is intended for discard as soon as it is used. Rather than discarding these scraps, however, Wang winds them into tight circles, embellishes them with gold and pearls, and comments on the meeting of Eastern and Western material and symbolism.

In her Wedding Series, Wang uses rings of oversized golden prongs as her central structure. Here she enlarges that form, actually mounting it on a second, simple ring shape or even hanging it from a chain. Topping the prongs with diamonds, emeralds, pink tourmaline, or citrine, Wang upsets the traditional stone-within-a-setting form, instead rendering the expected setting as a crownlike object, with tiny semiprecious and precious stones attached. This crown form also creates a tension, confronting the viewer with a new tradition: an engagement setting that is too large to wear on the traditional ring finger, and that is no longer dominated by the precious stone.

Wang also displays a third series, Meeting, where the objects become so large that they step beyond the realm of merely wearable jewelry and address new debates about the relationship of jewelry to sculpture. Pearls, both freshwater and cultured, are now encased in curving sterling silver pods, suspended within repeating silver disks, or crated within open silver boxes. These large pieces present the question of jewelry as status symbol: Is it still jewelry when the piece becomes too large to wear comfortably? When does the object step beyond jewelry to become wearable sculpture?

Just as Wang breaks away from traditional form by combining, enlarging, and decorating in unexpected ways, the curators at DCCA have accepted her challenge by disdaining the tradition of displaying metalwork and jewelry in cases. Although several objects benefit from being protected within cases, others dangle from wall mounts (the Marriage Series) or are suspended so that they cast fleeting shadows on the pedestal below. This allows the viewer to examine the piece in the round, experiencing pearls and silver as three-dimensional forms. Objects within the Meeting Series thus become a sequence of miniature mobiles, further blurring the demarcation between wearable jewelry and sculpture.

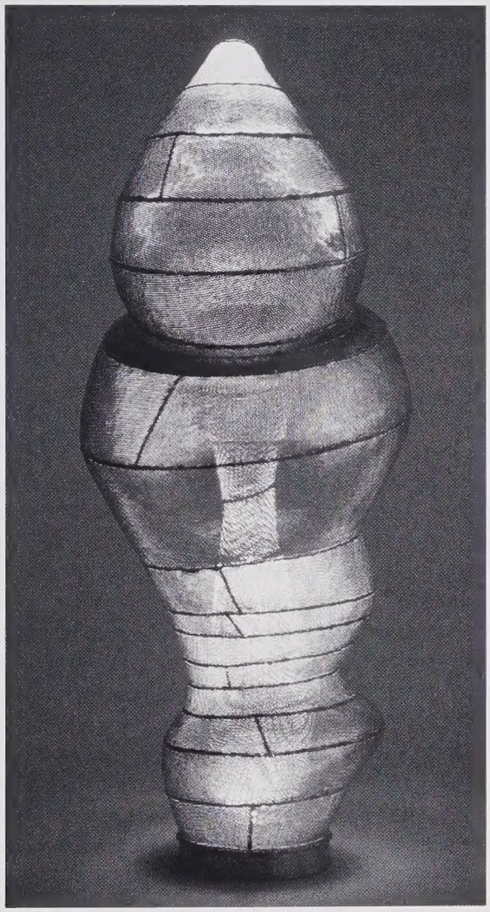
Kiwon Wang's series all address duality, a trait that Wang acknowledges: "In every step of my jewelry creation I test Eastern traditional boundaries and Western modern boundaries in the realm of objects that adorn the body through contrast, tension, absence and presence."

**Sandra L. Tatman** is assistant professor of art at Towson University, Maryland.

## "MARKERS IN CONTEMPORARY METAL"

SAMUEL DORSKY MUSEUM OF ART, STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK, NEW PALTZ
JANUARY 30–MARCH 15, 2002

by TACEY A. ROSOLOWSKI



**clockwise from top left**
Sharon Portelance
*Denied But Not Forgotten*, 2000
sterling silver, 22k gold, glass
4 x 4 x 1"
Photo: Robert Diamante

J. Fred Woell
*Be Prepared*, 1972
cast brass
$4\,1/2 \times 2\,3/8 \times 2\,3/8$"

Rod McCormick
*Way*, 1998
welded and formed aluminum, electrical components, halogen bulb

"Markers in Contemporary Metal," curated by James Bennett and Myra Mimlitsch-Gray, is one of a number of exhibitions mounted to inaugurate the opening of SUNY New Paltz's newly renovated and expanded Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art. Director Neil Trager confirms that the Dorsky is one of the most active SUNY museums, and one which, through former faculty member Robert Ebendorf's encouragement, has chosen metalwork as a collecting focus. Installed in the new wing's Project Room, "Markers" showcases objects from the permanent collection, supplemented by loans from artists with New Paltz connections—faculty, students, or artists from other institutions involved in the annual "Conversations" conference hosted by SUNY at New Paltz until 1996.

The show was conceived and organized to acknowledge the passing of skills and design influence from teacher to student, documenting in particular the academy's generative role in American metalwork since the 1960s. Bennett and Mimlitsch-Gray have selected a diverse range of objects to represent academic metalsmithing's main conceptual and aesthetic preoccupations.

An example of formal study, C. James Meyer's *Silver Lidded Bowl* explores the octahedron, whose edges and lines mark that ambiguous region where vessel and lid are both separate and linked as a single body. Joe Wood's CAD-CAM bracelets (evocatively titled *Lumpy* and *Knobby*) and Rod McCormick's illuminated aluminum sculpture, *Way*, seem to veer off in other directions, but in fact document the appearance of new traditions, as technology influences design process. Gary Noffke's *Chopper* returns to primordial roughness. Its whorled grip captures a moment in the forging process, yet also recalls a snug fit in a palm, celebrating interactions with metal in all its material and functional incarnations.

Formalist study, structures emerging from new technologies or materials, process-driven work—the strength of this exhibition resides in provocative juxtapositions, consciously staged as an outgrowth of SUNY New Paltz's commitment to understanding how historical precedent informs the creative strategies of individual artists. In *Hart Plaza Plate*, for example, Mary Douglas applies traditional repoussé oak leaves to the border of a purchased copper plate, and to its center, a realist painting of the stark Noguchi sculpture in downtown Detroit. She thus self-consciously melds tradition with a commentary on urban alienation and the function of commemorative objects. In Sharon Portelance's brooch, *Denied But Not Forgotten*, dark, floridly worked metal surges to the eye, while the text forming the brooch's rim is de-sacralized—it can be read only in a mirror. The piece recalls Victorian mourning jewelry, ironically manipulating culture's valorization of language over visual ornament.

Also represented are works with a narrative flavor and a spirit of figurative eclecticism, jewelry celebrations of the body, presentation pieces and—most provocative—a grouping that explicitly plays with perception and concepts. J. Fred Woell's cast brass figure, *Be Prepared*, for example, exploits the small scale of the toy soldier or souvenir. The figure's diminutive fist-as-erection forcefully transports us back to an era of dramatic national conflict over militarism. *Be Prepared* is displayed alongside Sherry Simm's oversized pink *Compact*, which humorously invokes contemporary explorations of hyperfemininity. *Compact* brings the male figure's gender critique into sharper focus, also underscoring how historical context influences interpretation.

"Markers" ends with the rich juxtapostition of Sharon Church's *Envy* neckpiece with Gary Griffin's *Hollyhock Gates*, represented by a black-and-white photo of the gates *in situ* and a scale model with examples of the full-sized floral elements displayed in front. These multiple representations play to Church's long neckpiece, whose heavy neck ring, oversized leaves, and long central thorn participate in the same visual universe of organic reference and flexible, relative scale. Body, ornament, architectural installation, and natural environment sit on a continuum so we may contemplate their connections without neutralizing the critical differences between artists' media and approaches.

Bennett and Mimlitsch-Gray have selected an extensive presentation of metalsmithing's trends, rather than an intensive investigation of a single theme. While no broad representation can be exhaustive, the seventy objects on display successfully capture the field's diversity and the aesthetic and conceptual stakes of either supporting or subverting tradition. (Brief descriptions of the exhibition's organizing categories would have been helpful.) "Markers" offers the opportunity to contemplate objects in dialogue with each other and with the community of artists that produced them.

**Tacey A. Rosolowski** is a writer who resides in Utica, New York.

## "NOELLYNN PEPOS: LIKE WAVES THEY BREAK"

ART MUSEUM OF MISSOULA, MONTANA
NOVEMBER 16, 2001–JANUARY 11, 2002

by BARBRA BRADY

**above**
*Out of the Bog*, 1997
steel, mica, pigments, gesso
dimensions variable
Photo: Jay Dotson

**above right**
*Like waves they break*, 2001
exhibition installation

Walking into "like waves they break," an installation of mixed-media metalworks by Noellynn Pepos, one of my first instincts was to remember the urging words of poet Paul Valéry: "Seeing is forgetting the name of the thing one sees." What I was seeing was the work of a sculptor. What I was forgetting was the need to classify the sculptural objects as metalworks, or the whiz-bang technical skills of the artist-maker at work.

Pepos does hold fast to claiming herself a "maker," a term not readily used by painters and "non-craft" sculptors. Though she tolerates her work being examined with a jeweler's loupe level of inspection, she does not want to be glorified for technique for technique's sake. One *could* find fascination with her making for making's sake. But I, for one, would remember Valéry's words. Pepos says that technique is for her not a means to an end, but a means to a beginning. She describes her creative planning process not with a jargon of tools and machines, but with a fluidity equal to the moment of steel being pulled from the forge. For her, it is to "look, gather, make, see where the correlations are, then finishing making." Her looking might begin during a walk through the woods near her home in Montana's Bitterroot Valley, or a reconnaissance mission to the scrap yard. In her studio, piles of found metal in various stages of formation lie incubating, as Pepos watches for the correlations. She does not make a calculated plan to set out to fabricate; that is not the scratch from which she starts. She lets the piles sit until she sees what is becoming.

On one "looking" trip, her attention turned to the ice crystallization on a creek surface. Its textures and turns of line inform *Wake*, a pouring-together of scattered steel (we're talking nails), traffic paint, and glass beads. A painter's eye might see a Pollock; a "What Does it Mean?" addict might sniff out a narrative on environmental impact. Ah, but a reading by forgetting the name (genre, technique) might allow one to see through the maker's eyes: lines drawn by nature's process, noticed by an artist, who gathered her materials of metal and...made.

*Out of the Bog* is an installation of fabricated steel textured with mica and gesso, the surfaces of its three objects as compelling as inquiries into their rendering process. One object stands tall, a charred obelisk looming over two smaller, rounder, tendrillar forms huddling on the floor; one of which retains the shapes of its metal of origin, cut nails combed while hot. We see the sway of hot, undulating metal fresh out of the forge. The curvilinear form recurs often, seen large in *Inside Passage*. Slumped iron wagon wheels suggesting a history of weight borne and the passage of service balance precariously among a spare pile of charred branchlike metal. Here, as in *Radiant Heat*, minute, moldlike accretions dot the surfaces and crevices, remnant splatters from the welding process, splatters that might have been erased by a smith more concerned with precision for precision's sake. They add tension that evokes a curiosity about Pepos's way of working, more thought-provoking than perfection-driven. Splatters and spills work to her advantage; they imbue her surfaces with a deeper meaning. What others might drat as mistake, Pepos explores.

Pepos has explored several mediums as well; from a background in jewelry-making (her work became human-scale), to landscape painting, wood sculpture, basketry, fabric, and paper. Such works as *Stole on Serving Table*, with its suggestion of still life, and *Wake*, which occupies pictorial more than sculptural space, contain elements of "drawing in space." Their movement of line, 2-D underpinnings, and composition of negative space are as accomplished as their corporeal, metal 3-D existence.

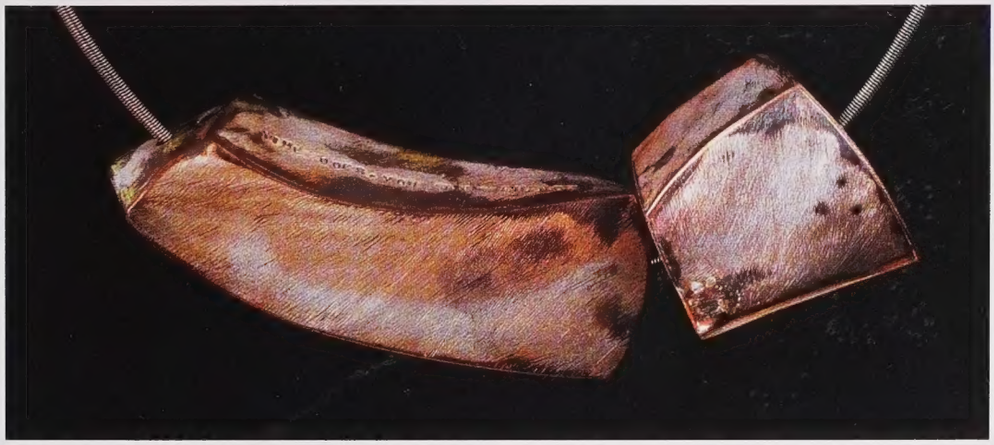
Noellynn Pepos's sculpture *could* be seen solely in terms of its technique, the coaxing of hot metal into form at the hands of a craftsman. But look again. A walk through "like waves they break," while forgetting what one is seeing (a technical coaxing of hot metal into form) encourages and evokes a look at her sculptural form. Pepos offers a transformation in seeing as powerful as the transformation at the forge.

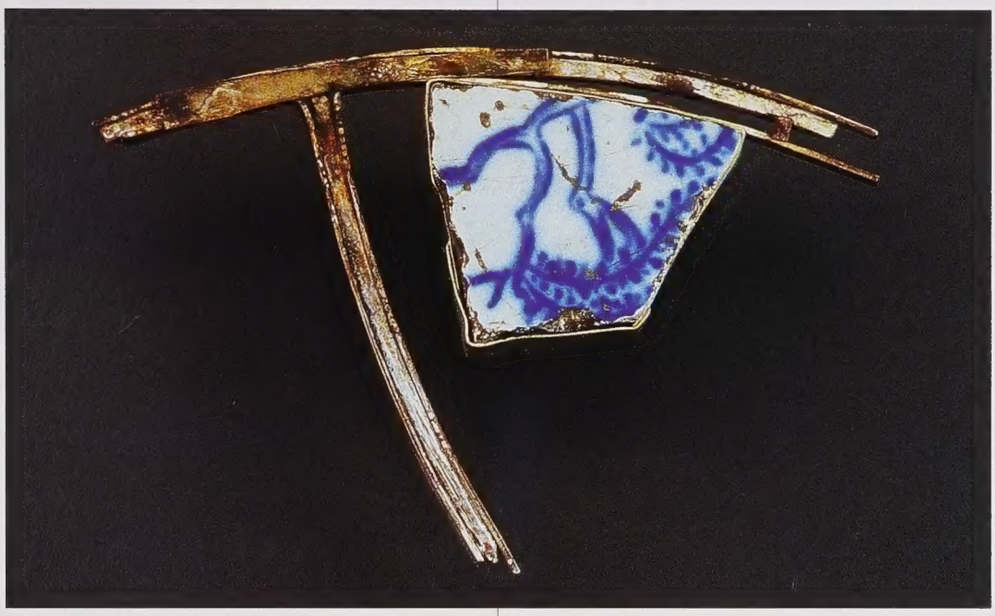
**Barbra Brady** is an independent writer and curator living in Missoula, Montana.

## "MICKI LIPPE: TIME & PLACE"

FACÈRÉ JEWELRY ART GALLERY, SEATTLE
MARCH 6–MARCH 20, 2002

by SUSAN MYERS





**above**
*There is No Place Like Home*, 2002
Place Brooch Series
sterling, 18k gold, pottery
3 x 4"
Photo: Richard Nicol

**above right**
*Time Out*, 2001
Warped Time Box Series
sterling
length 25"
Photo: Richard Nicol

Micki Lippe welcomed her recent stay in Germany as an opportunity to affect change in her work as a jeweler. Among her German colleagues, Lippe took on the concept of creating thematic work focusing on "time" and "place." As evidenced in the works she recently exhibited at Facèré Gallery, as part of their "Time and Place" exhibition, this new context refreshed her ways of seeing, problem solving, designing, and making. Two of Lippe's new series, of Warped Time Boxes and Place Brooches, best explore her new approach.

The design of the Place Brooches is derived from the lines, shapes, and patterns found in maps. Curved roadways, riverways, and train tracks have been articulated by Lippe in fabricated sterling that skirts shards of found pottery, glass, and pebbles, all bezel-set in 18k gold. The found elements present in the brooches serve as memory placeholders for both the traveler who found them and the culture that discarded them. The surface of these jewelry pieces—obvious hammer and file marks coupled with stark white pickled metal and the patina of the torch—contrasts sharply with Lippe's usual refinement. This intentional shift reinforces the position of these objects as artifacts marking their place in time.

In the Warped Time Boxes series, Lippe uses the duration of the fabrication process as a measurement of time. Each neckpiece in this series consists of two boxlike sterling forms grouped and strung together on 25-inch sterling chain. Here, the surface treatment of each form acts as a map and record of its construction. Solder lines, exposed edges, and file marks detail the artist's endeavors. The architectural appearance of this jewelry is reminiscent of the built environment around us. Like Lippe's Place Brooches, this series suggests the manmade urban landscape, as well as the construction and evolution of place through time.

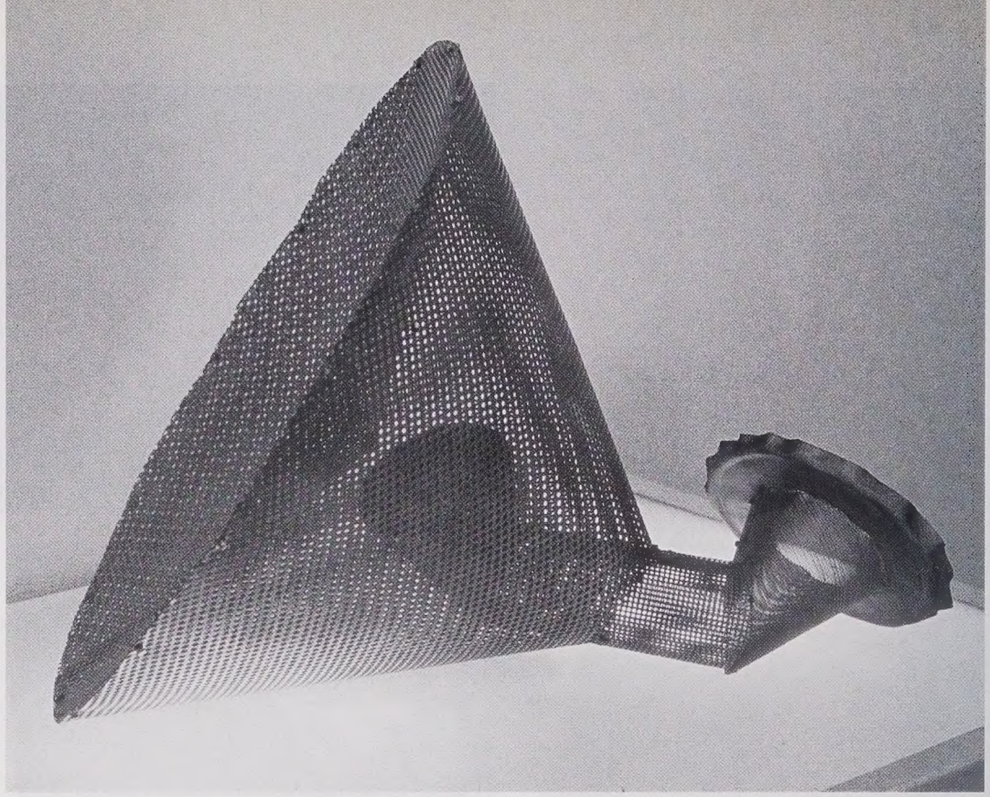
In contrast, the artist's Memory Garden series focuses on the natural landscape. Three garden elements, rendered in sterling, brass, and/or copper, are selectively hung together in each neckpiece. These elements, which range from simple twigs to complex flower forms, are not as highly stylized as Lippe's previous work. The artist takes full advantage of the range of colors and textures generated with the jeweler's torch for the surface of each neckpiece, again using surface as an opportunity to remark on time as it relates to the fabrication process.

Dispersed throughout the display cases were several pairs of earrings that provided an interesting counterpoint to Lippe's neckpieces. This smaller-scale work was inherently more refined in surface and understated in comparison to the other jewelry presented, but provided a visual bridge between the artist's earlier production-oriented work and her new approach.

This transition is also apparent in five additional neckpieces on display: *Fall, Winter, Spring, Summer*, and *The Seasons Go Round and Round* are also more refined in appearance and predictable in design and approach. However, like the Memory Garden series, they succeed in highlighting the cycle of change in the natural world and its role in defining place.

The exhibition also featured work by Lippe's German counterparts Andrea Wipperman, Beate Eisman, and Silke Trekel. These three accomplished artists successfully illustrated how place can influence one's approach to designing and creating jewelry: it was evident that they all shared a common thread, either education or experience. For Lippe, the place that these artists call home became, for a time, the incentive for a change in how she created jewelry. What has not changed is her concern with function, attention to detail, and clarity of design.

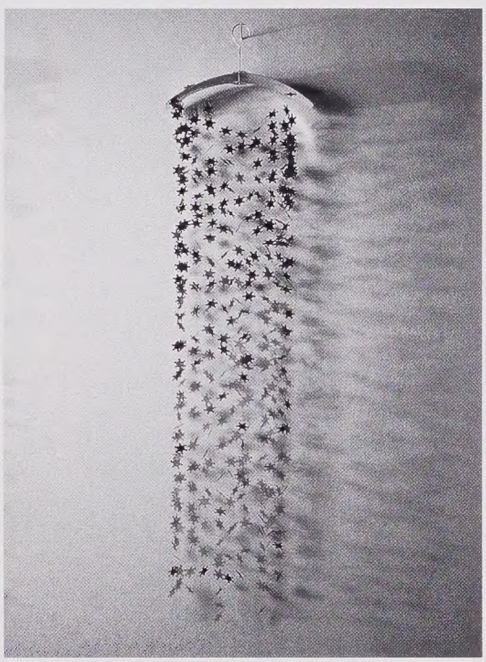
**Susan Myers** is a visual artist and metalsmith who lives in Seattle.



## "SECOND NATURE"

ADAIR MARGO GALLERY, EL PASO, TEXAS
JANUARY 8–MARCH 4, 2002

by STEPHANIE L. TAYLOR



The title of this exhibition refers to the seemingly ubiquitous references to flora and fauna in design history, from the trained and tortured gardens of Versailles, to Arts and Crafts wallpaper patterns, to the "vines" creeping through Art Deco structures, and beyond. However, the concept of "second nature" also hints at the way that the eight featured artists in this national exhibition thought twice about their depiction of typical, some might say overused, organic themes. The multiplicity of natures presented at the Adair Margo Gallery testified to both the skill of these artists and the deep font of symbolic and expressive power that can still be found in the world around us.

One of Roberta Williamson's delicate arrangements of small offerings to love, *His Lips Sought the Morning Dew*, featured actual seeds nestled within a shallow silver dish ornamented with tiny bees and leaves, all crafted from silver. An ornate silver spoon was included, to serve a tiny repast for a sensually sated lover or a famished bird. Williamson's natural forms, suggestive titles, and delicate Victorian design sensibility evoked thoughts of poets like Emily Dickinson, and illustrated the grand passions that can be expressed in chaste forms and simple symbols.

The works of Harlan Butt also relied upon realistic portrayals of natural spaces to suggest the world outside of the gallery. His *Kogo: Winter Forest*, a small copper vessel worked with *shibuichi*, silver, and enamel, bore a scene of bare and frosted tree branches. Despite the small scale of this object, Butt managed to imply the infinite space of a winter sky espied when moving through a snowbound landscape; an odd encounter with frost and chill in the sand and sun of West Texas, to be sure.

Two of the exhibition's more intriguing works, perhaps because of the challenge implied in the effort, used a much more abstract visual language to conjure the sights and sounds of winter. A small enamel and sterling brooch called *Winterstorm*, designed by Barbara Seidenath, employed random scratches on a rectangular surface of pale, buffed silver that transformed into glinting white tree branches in the viewer's eye. Like Butt's depiction of a winter forest, Seidenath's work made a hot El Paso day feel perceptibly cooler, as if pinning this never-melting chunk of frost to one's lapel might make air conditioning unnecessary. The same might be said of Rachelle Thiewes's towering forms, four white-gold and silver bracelets all titled *Shimmer*. The light glinting off of the oscillating discs suspended from each wire armature conjured snowflakes, and the bright metallic music caused when the bracelet jangles on the arm, was reminiscent of sleigh bells.

Several of the artists in this show exhibited works that implied the interaction between humans and nature, though their efforts were widely varied. Julia Barello displayed a series of four *Penanular Gowns*, each dress a delicate stream of small motifs meant to suggest a season—a bird for spring, a flower blossom for summer, a leaf for autumn, a snowflake for winter. Each of these forms was cut from bluish X-ray film and suspended from a specially crafted silver hanger on strands of nearly invisible nylon filament. The unusual application of detritus from the medical world strengthened the gowns' association with structures and skeletons, and added unexpected color, along with the *frisson* of thoughts about the stages of life, which follow a course as sure as the passage of the seasons.

This conflation of the human body and organic patterns was reflected and extended in Carolyn Desch's reduction of the most intimate human organs to geometric metal and mesh forms, which converted nature to a sublime sort of technology. While they were not the most beautiful objects on display, Desch's *Unnaturally Rational* copper organs, including a stomach, heart, lungs, and, most spectacularly, a large, cone-shaped uterus, served as horrific revisions of human anatomy, equal parts Francis Picabia and Dr. Frankenstein. The objects, simultaneously compelling and repellent, represented the artist's attempt to create "unemotional and mechanical" versions of body parts that are normally imbued with the tenderest human feelings (such as love) and most vital human activities (digestion, respiration, reproduction).

Second looks, second thoughts, second chances: all describe the experience of the viewers of, as well as the artists participating in, "Second Nature."

**Stephanie L. Taylor**, an art historian, is assistant professor of art at New Mexico State University.

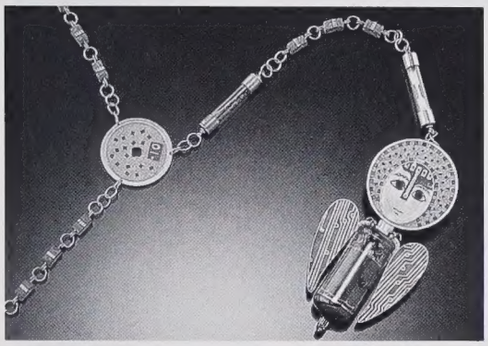
**above right**
Carolyn Desch
*Unnaturally Rational*, 2001
perforated brass, light box
12 x 14 x 12"

**above left**
Julia Barello
*Penanular Gown (winter)*, 2002
X-ray film, silver

## "MATERIAL EXPLORATIONS: WEARABLE OBJECTS OF NON-TRADITIONAL MATERIALS"

MUNSON WILLIAMS PROCTOR ARTS INSTITUTE SCHOOL OF ART GALLERY, UTICA, NEW YORK
MARCH 29–APRIL 20, 2002

by MARGO MENSING



**clockwise from top**
Noppakamol Pimolket
*Lacetex Series #1*, 2001
rubber bands, sterling silver
5 1/2 x 5 1/4 x 1/8"

Elizabeth Hake
*Unbangle Bracelets*
rubber
largest 4 1/2 x 3 1/2 x 7/8"

Leslie Perrino
*Computum Rosarium #3*
mixed media
Photo: Larry Sanders

"Material Explorations," curated by Tacey Rosolowski in collaboration with Chris Irick, contained everything but the kitchen sink. A partial roll call of materials included: refrigerator gel, rubber bands, acrylic fingernails, dressmaker's pattern paper, rubber, Teflon, silicone, chemical hand warmer, vinyl records, license plates, CD-ROMs, lamb fur, and vacuum tubes. The premise that any material can be manipulated into a stunning and seductive adornment is a well-worn one, but the accepted works proved that there is still plenty of grist for this mill. Besides diversity of materials, much of the work succeeded through its blending of non-traditional, sometimes seemingly inappropriate or even disgusting materials, and traditional metals. The eye and the hand of the jeweler were evident throughout, whether found materials were the sole material source, as in Elizabeth Hake's "Unbangle Bracelets" made of rubber; or found material was combined with precious or semiprecious metals, as in Noppakamol Pimolet's *Lacetex Series #1*. This plain, flat-silver neckband exuded sinuous strands of rubber bands. The delight in this necklace resided in its simplicity, in the warmth of the creamy white against the silver.

The question arises when working with the ephemeral (manufactured goods as well as the natural): What will these necklaces, brooches, and bracelets look like two years, a decade, or a century from now? This necklace, and many others that married these two kinds of materials, argued for resignation to gradual onslaught of decay—changing coloration, the flexible ossifying, and then poof, crumbling. In *"Lacetex Series #1"* the result would be a simple silver necklace, certainly still pleasing. But then, longevity is exactly what these makers set aside when they engaged Rosolowski's curatorial premise: "The New Jewelry makes us understand that value is not an intrinsic, natural part of any material."

Only a few objects eschewed all precious metal. Even Troy Hines's delicate steel *Barrel Collar Necklace* incorporated sterling silver for the clasp. Nicole Bsullak's *Threads of Life* celebrated life in a humble statement using nothing but cloth. The artist unraveled a shirt belonging to a deceased family friend and reconstructed the threads into a chain of frayed bits. In contrast, Val Hunt's *Illusion Necklace*, made of Whitbread and Guinness beer-can metal, though also of strictly found and seemingly mundane stuff, was so grand it bordered on flamboyant. Hunt's adroit reassembly showed no visible logos, a contributing factor to its elegance.

Other works included liberal use of precious metals, but in a supporting role. Harriete Estel Berman's *Identity Beads Necklace*, of recycled tin beads emblazoned with bar codes, begged to be worn. The enormous beads, with their pinked metal edges set in red Plexiglas, were strung to emphasize edges and color. Brooke E. Marks's *Almost Faberge* highlighted plastic tubing with an embedded nylon web, set off against a large silver clasp with faux pearls.

"Material Explorations" did not have a catalogue, but it was girded with a scholarly approach. After the works were juried, Rosolowski conjured six categories: Exploring the Ephemeral, Industrial Materials, Social Commentary, Ritual Objects, Traditional Forms Re-Interpreted, and Aesthetic Perception Transformed. In most cases, classifying the jewelry and objects in categories offered viewers a means to analyze homogeneous perceptions and material approaches between artists. Traditional Forms Re-Interpreted was an especially engaging category, as Rosolowski provided photos of historical jewelry referenced by the contemporary works, along with notes. Displayed with Hunt's *Illusion Necklace and Earrings* was a photo of a Van Cleef & Arpels c. 1935 "scarf" design, made of polished yellow gold decorated with citrines. Another fine piece in this section was Hye-young Suh's *Webbing Necklace*, made of adhesive (hot glue), copper-electroformed adhesive, and nickel plating. Compared to an Art Nouveau necklace of yellow gold, opals, and diamonds, Suh's was the standout. Marguerite Chiang's *CD-ROMs Necklace*, suggesting Tutankhamun's collar, was not only spare and elegant, but as Rosolowski suggests, metaphorically persuasive, inferring that today information is power and often the pathway to wealth.

But this approach also had its drawbacks, in attempting to codify what could not be so regularly classified. The Aesthetic Perception Transformed category was a mishmash of whatever did not fit into the other groups, and the premise offered nothing new. Sometimes the objects fit equally or better into other categories. For instance, Leslie Perrino's *Computum Rosarium #3*, a rosary made from circuit board, sterling silver, electrical fuses, vacuum tube, diskette center, resistors, cement, and electrical components, appeared under Traditional Forms Re-Interpreted; why not Ritual Objects? However, part of the fun with an ambitious exhibition such as this is questioning why curators choose to organize works in a certain way.

**Margo Mensing,** an artist and writer, teaches Fibers at Skidmore College.

# COMMISSIONS

by Elizabeth Broadrup Lieberman

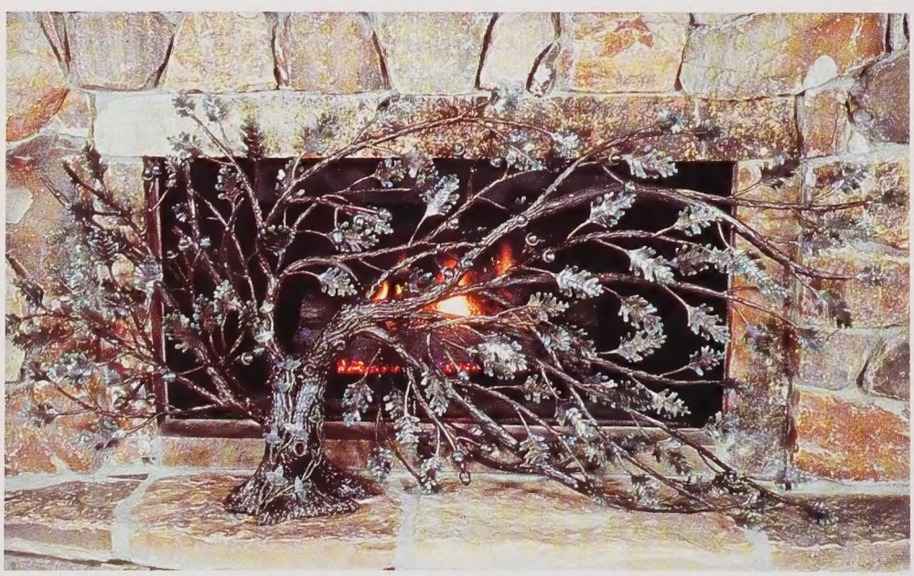
**Hugh Culley, *Oaktree Screen*, 2001**
Commissioned by Private Client, Park City, Utah

Hugh Culley's custom metal work, including architectural railings and gates, brought him to the attention of a new client building a timber frame home on a ski slope in Park City, Utah. The homeowner commissioned Culley to create seven metal fireplace screens, as well as forged handrails and a guardrail panel. The metalsmith designed the fire screens in two different styles, organic and contemporary. The more geometric, contemporary screens include hammered copper and repoussé with decorative ironwork trim, while the organic screens have flowing metalwork that alludes to natural forms. The freestanding *Oaktree Screen* incorporates bent steel branches that rise to shield the gas fireplace or drape gently to the natural stone hearth. Designing such a large screen as a single cohesive and self-supporting form was Culley's main challenge. To fabricate *Oaktree Screen*, Culley cut, hammered, and welded steel pipe tubing to form the tree trunk and larger branches, while the smaller branches were forged on a power hammer and textured with a die to simulate bark. Culley shaped the steel leaves on a plasma cutter, then textured them with a hammer and chisel. The metalsmith designed and fabricated the seven fire screens and additional architectural works over eight months, installing the last piece for the enthusiastic homeowner in 2001.

**Elizabeth Broadrup Lieberman** is a freelance writer living in Michigan.

**above right**
Christina A. Lemon
*Presidential Medallion and Chain*, 2001
sterling silver, 18k gold, sapphires
medallion: 3 1/2 x 3 1/2", chain: 42"

**below**
Hugh Culley
*Oaktree Screen*, 2001
steel
3 x 5 ' x 8 "

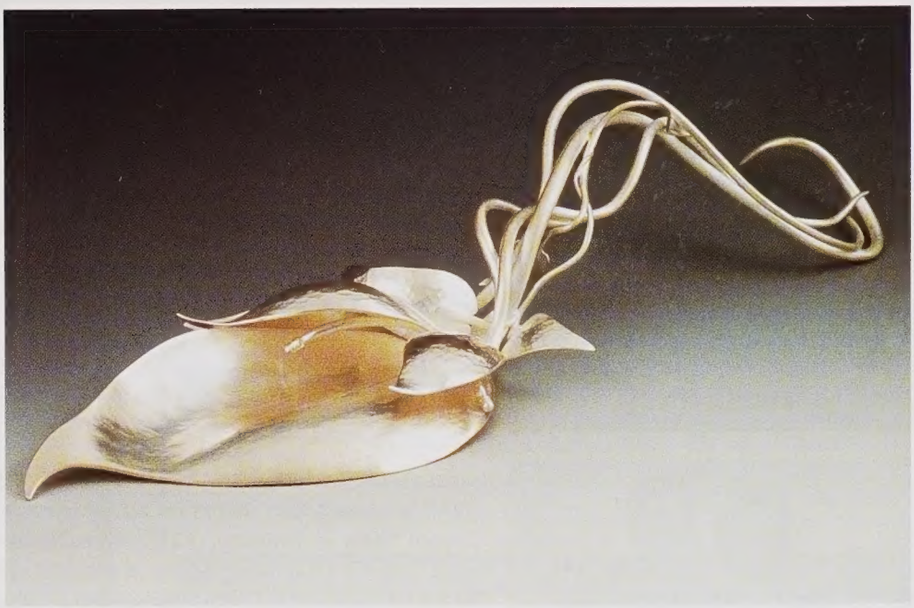


**Christina A. Lemon, *Presidential Medallion and Chain*, 2001**
Commissioned by Georgia Southern University, Statesboro

Georgia Southern University honored the inauguration of its eleventh president, Bruce Grube, by commissioning a new medallion and chain for his academic regalia. Administration officials asked the faculty's only metalsmith, Assistant Professor of Art Christina A. Lemon, to create a medallion suited to the new president: conservative and traditional in style. (The medallion worn by Mr. Grube's predecessor, in contrast, was contemporary and sculptural.) President Grube requested that the design incorporate the school's colors—blue, gold, and white—as well as symbols of the six colleges within the university. Lemon decided to make a relief of the Pittman Administration Building, which houses the president's office, the focal element of her medallion design. The building's classical pediment and columns symbolize commitment to knowledge. At the medallion's center, the university seal lies within a circular border that alludes to Sweetheart Circle, a prominent campus landmark. Lemon textured the background with a pine needle motif, recalling the pine forests that once grew on campus. Six blue sapphire cabochon stones set in gold bezels, representing the six colleges, stud the medallion's base. While the university seal was cast in gold, Lemon fabricated the rest of the sterling silver medallion with a brazing technique, using silver solder to connect sheet metal and wire. The chain includes cast gold university seals linked by columns and triangles that repeat architectural motifs from the medallion. Lemon's hardest task was designing and fabricating the medallion within three months while maintaining a full-time teaching load. President Grube wore the new presidential medallion on a ribbon at his inauguration in April 2001. Lemon created the chain several months later, completing the commission.

**Jan Mandel, *Stoneshadow Series #1*, 2001**
Commissioned by Helen Brooks

Former clothing designer Jan Mandel turned to metalsmithing because, she explains, "metal had the same fluidity that fiber had." Mandel designs jewelry that also embodies fluidity of use, allowing a wearer to transform her creations into different shapes, sizes, and functions. While working toward her master of fine arts degree at the University of Washington in Seattle, Mandel met Helen Brooks, an artist who manages the local Facèré Gallery. When Brooks acquired 17 large raw aquamarines, she asked Mandel to incorporate them into jewelry and gave her complete freedom of design. Trained to observe how a garment fits the contours of a body, Mandel creates each commissioned jewelry piece to suit the body of its owner. Helen Brooks's statuesque height allowed Mandel to construct a piece of dramatic length. She designed two necklaces of stainless steel cable strung with raw aquamarines, which together measure 42 inches long. To complement the necklaces, she fashioned five unique 18-karat gold brooches and a companion ring set with the remaining aquamarine. Together, the jewelry offers what Mandel calls "a multiplicity of uses." The brooches can be worn singly or attached with serpent hooks along the length of the necklaces. The necklaces can be worn separately as a bracelet or squared choker, or combined into a traditional long necklace, or assembled as a short necklace with a long extension draped asymmetrically down the wearer's torso. Brooks can create at least 15 variations of jewelry to suit her mood or needs. Mandel describes her work as "contemporary transformation jewelry," an homage to the style that emerged when parure, matched jewelry sets, fell out of fashion in the late nineteenth-century.



**Charleen Weidell, *Tart Server*, 2001**
Commissioned by Benton Seymour Rabinovitch

Benton Seymour Rabinovitch, a professor emeritus of chemistry at University of Washington in Seattle, began collecting antique bladed servers more than thirty years ago. Having amassed hundreds of eighteenth-century sterling silver servers, he decided to commission contemporary silversmiths to create unique new serving pieces—antiques for the future. Rabinovitch sought to identify talented new artists through the Society of American Silversmiths' Student Silversmiths Competition 2000. Charleen Weidell, a jewelry and metalsmithing graduate student at San Diego State University in California, won the grand prize and, consequently, a $1,500 commission from Rabinovitch. The collector gave her complete freedom in designing a bladed server, requiring only that the sterling silver piece weigh at least 10 troy ounces. Knowing that her work would join a collection encompassing hundreds of servers, both traditional and contemporary, Weidell set out to create a piece that would reflect her individual aesthetic while conforming to the collection's high standards of craftsmanship. Inspired by botanical forms, she designed a server with a curved leaf blade and tendrils that twine, in sensuous lines, into a handle. Since the blade does not rest flat, the server is purely decorative. Weidell presented *Tart Server*, her first commission as a metalsmith, to Rabinovitch in 2001. As part of the Rabinovitch collection, Weidell's piece is on display in "Contemporary Broad Bladed Servers," an exhibition traveling in England, Scotland, and the United States through 2003.

**above**
Charleen Weidell
*Tart Server*, 2001
sterling silver
13 x 3 1/2 x 3 1/2"

**left**
Jan Mandel
*Stoneshadow Series #1*, 2001
aquamarine, 18k gold, stainless steel
45 x 2 1/4 x 1 1/4"

# SOCIETY OF NORTH AMERICAN GOLDSMITHS

The Organization for Jewelers, Designers and Metalsmiths

www.snagmetalsmith.org

## SNAG Awards at ACC Baltimore

SNAG presented four awards for achievement in jewelry and metalsmithing at Baltimore's American Craft Council Show in February, 2002. Jurors Rosanne Raab, independent curator, and Beth Ann Gerstein, executive director of the Society of Arts & Crafts, selected jeweler Donna D'Aquino to receive SNAG's Award for Excellence. D'Aquino received a $500 cash prize and guaranteed admission to next year's ACC Baltimore show. Honorable Mention awards were presented to Jon Michael Route for his holloware, to David D'Imperio for his lighting, and to Reiko Ishiyama for her jewelry. All four award recipients also received a one-year SNAG membership.

## Successful Denver Conference

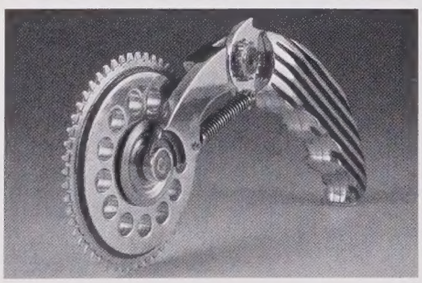
Nearly 700 jewelers, metalsmiths, collectors, and gallery owners gathered for four days in Denver for the 2002 SNAG conference. The conference host was the Colorado Metalsmiths Association, co-chaired by Nancy Blair, Julie Jerman-Melka, and Richard Sweetman. SNAG gives special thanks to the following Gold Sponsors of the conference: the Art Jewelry Forum, Frei & Borel, Hoover & Strong, and 3M, Inc. Keynote speaker Lily Yeh, executive director of The Village of Arts and Humanities in Philadelphia, brought the audience to tears with her presentation, "The Transformative Power of Art." Other highlights of the conference included Italian goldsmith Giovanni Corvaja addressing his complex wirework, granulation, and platinum, and Michael Boyd's demonstration of working with stones. Seventeen exhibitions in thirteen citywide venues included "Metals: The Colorado Connection" at the Denver International Airport, "State of the Art—Gold & Platinum," at R. Kimball Designs gallery, "Sculptural Attitudes—Jewelers as Sculptors," at Show of Hands Gallery, and a wonderful student exhibition at the Metro Gallery alongside the 3M exhibition (see below). The next SNAG conference will be held May 21 to 25, 2003, in San Francisco, at the St. Francis Hotel on Union Square.

## 3M-sponsored "Innovative Tools" Exhibition in Denver

3M, Inc. and SNAG partnered to create the competition and exhibition "Innovative Tools for Personal Use." The exhibition opened June 14 at Denver's Metro Gallery of the Center for the Visual Arts, as the centerpiece of the conference's annual Gallery Night. The work displayed included more than 90 pieces, chosen by three jurors: silversmith Charles Crowley, jeweler Kiff Slemmons, and Yale decorative arts professor Edward S. Cooke, Jr. During the conference, judges Mary Lee Hu and Harold O'Connor chose the work of Jennifer Crupi, Hye-Young Suh, and Pei-Jung Chen (in the category of "Tools Worn on the Body"), and Nissa Kubly, Jeremy Waak, and Rebecca Scheer (for "Tools Not Worn on the Body"), to receive the 3M sponsored prizes totaling $18,000. At the conference's opening night reception, Ron Wenaas, head of 3M public relations and corporate communications, selected Frankie Flood to receive the 3M Judge's Choice award for his piece, *Pizza Cutter with Easy Rider Suspension*.

## The SNAG Collection at SOFA Chicago

The new "SNAG Collection" will launch its premiere event at SOFA Chicago, October 24-27, 2002, with the theme of "Body Geometrics: Brooches." Coordinated by member Sandie Zilker, the SNAG Collection is a silent auction to support SNAG's educational programming. Twelve artists, represented by galleries exhibiting at SOFA, have each donated a piece to the SNAG Collection: Susan Sloan, and Jeff and Susan Wise, from Aaron Faber Gallery; Biba Schutz, Reiko Ishiyama, and Micki Lippe, from Charon Kransen Arts; Johan Van Aswegan from Sienna Gallery; Sydney Lynch from William Zimmer Gallery; Roberta and Dave Williamson from the Works Gallery; Billie Jean Theide from Yaw Gallery; Boris Bally from William and Joseph Gallery; Mary Lee Hu from Mobilia Gallery; and Marcia Macdonald from Hibberd-McGrath Gallery.



**from top**

SNAG executive director Dana Singer presenting the ribbon to Donna D'Aquino, recipient of SNAG's 2002 Award for Excellence in Jewelry and Metals

Jennifer Crupi
*Posture Gauge Series, Chin*
sterling silver, steel, copper
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Nissa Kubly
*Compositional Viewing Camera*
brass, copper, plexiglass
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Frankie Flood
*Pizza Cutter with Easy Rider Suspension*
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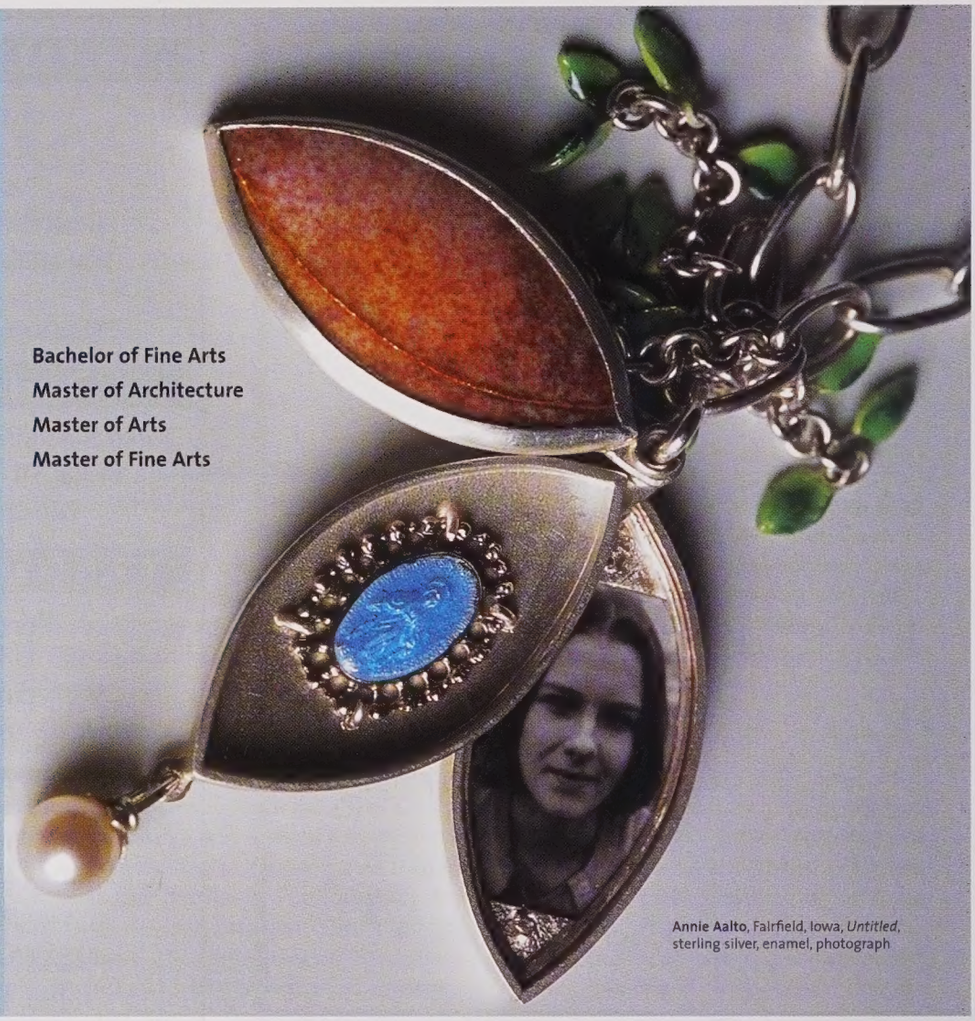

**Annie Aalto**, Fairfield, Iowa, *Untitled*, sterling silver, enamel, photograph

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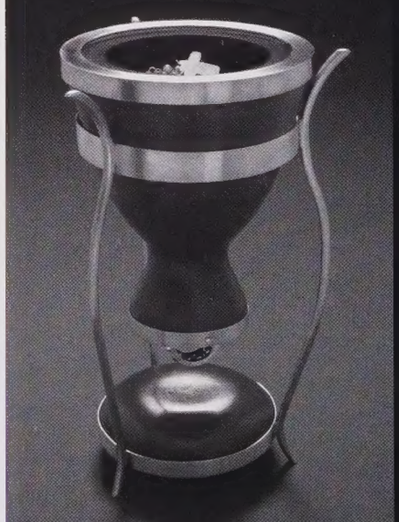

Denise Smitherman, "Urn," Sterling Silver, Mahogany, Milk Paint, Pearls, Dirt, 2001, 8" x 6" x 6", (first year metals student)
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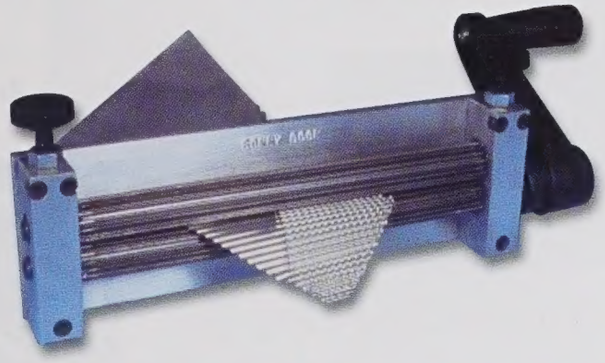

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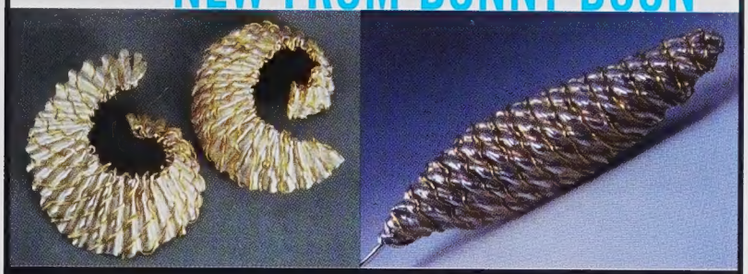

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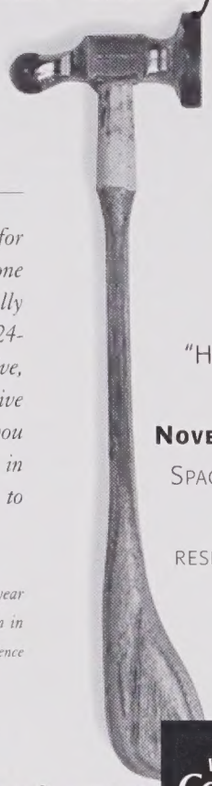

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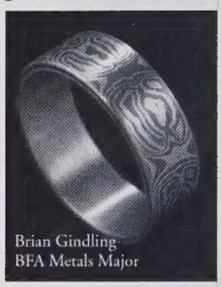

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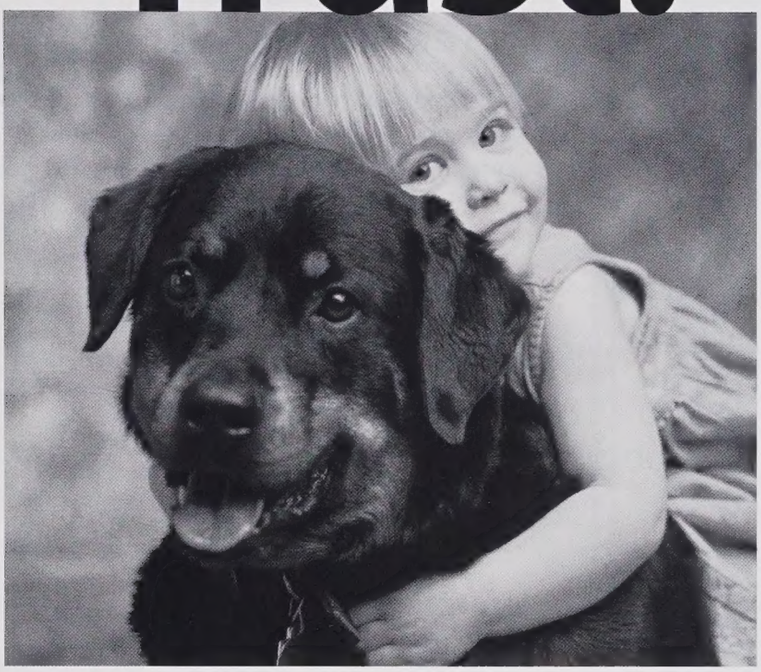

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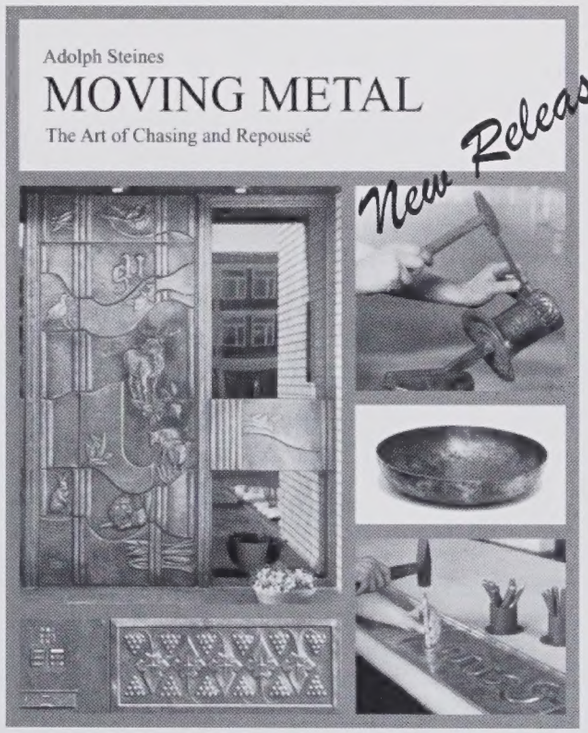


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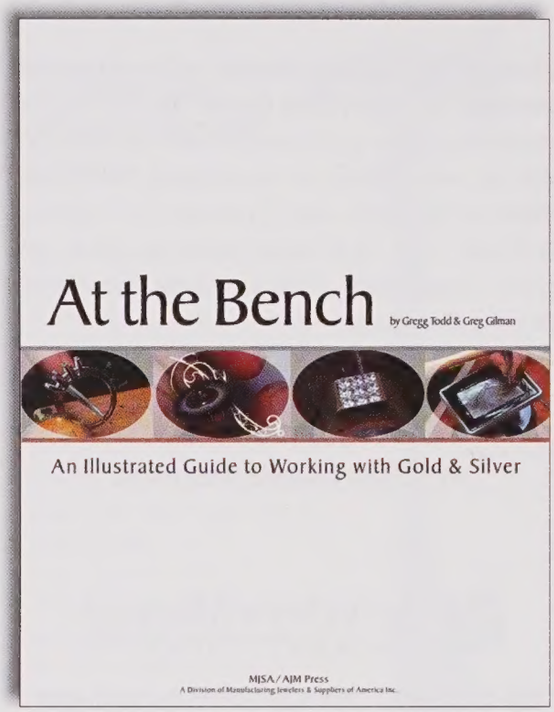
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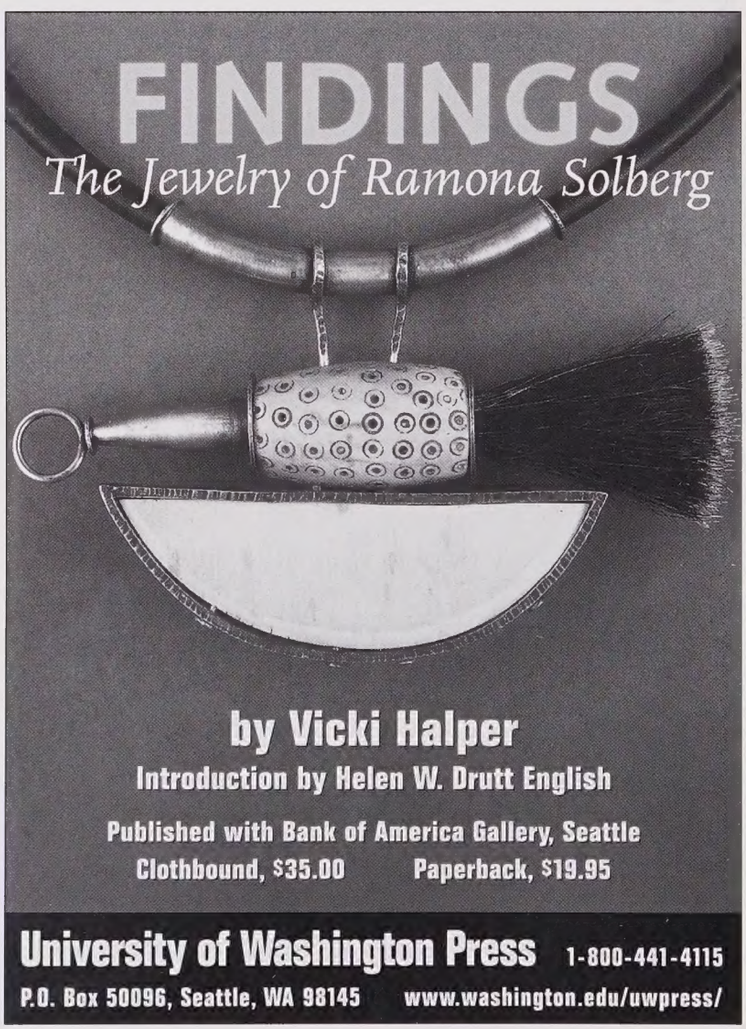
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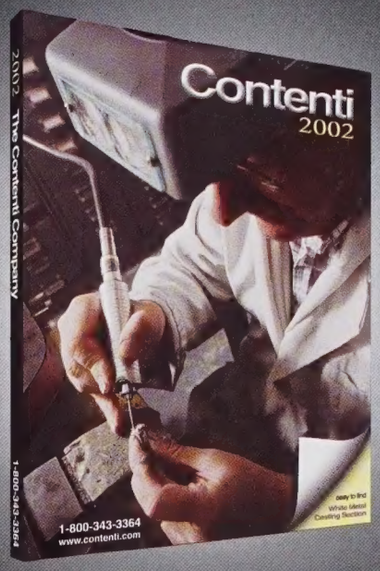


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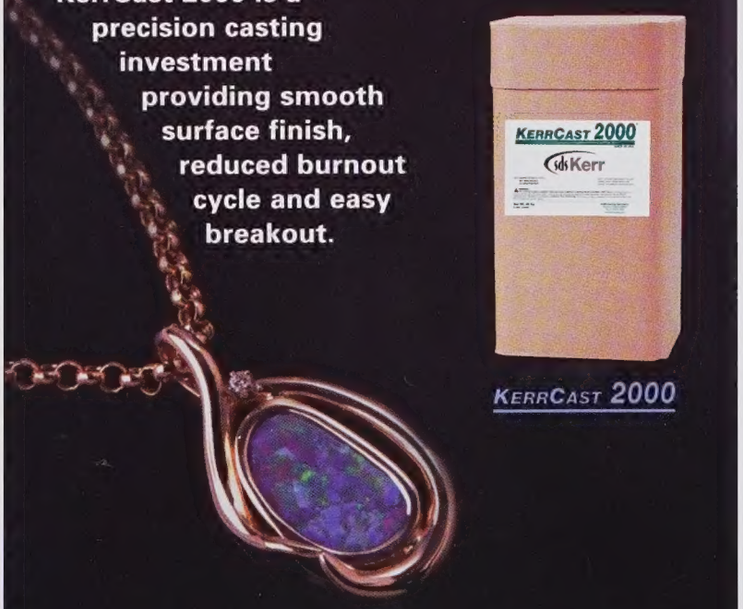


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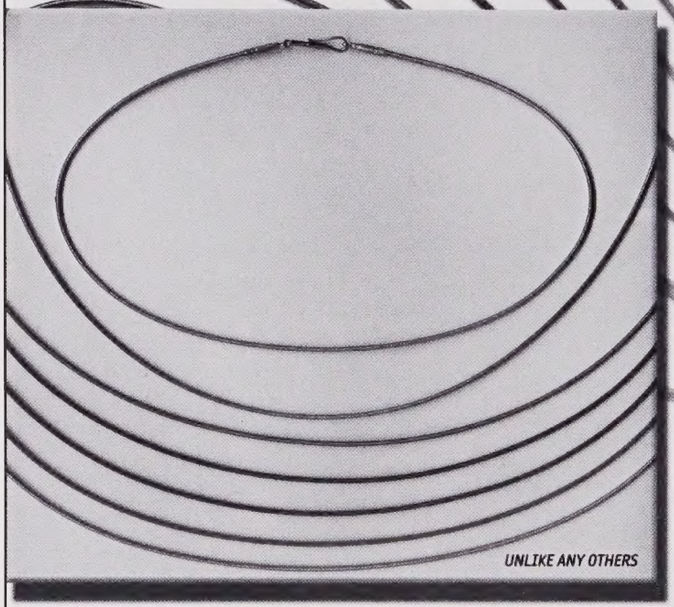


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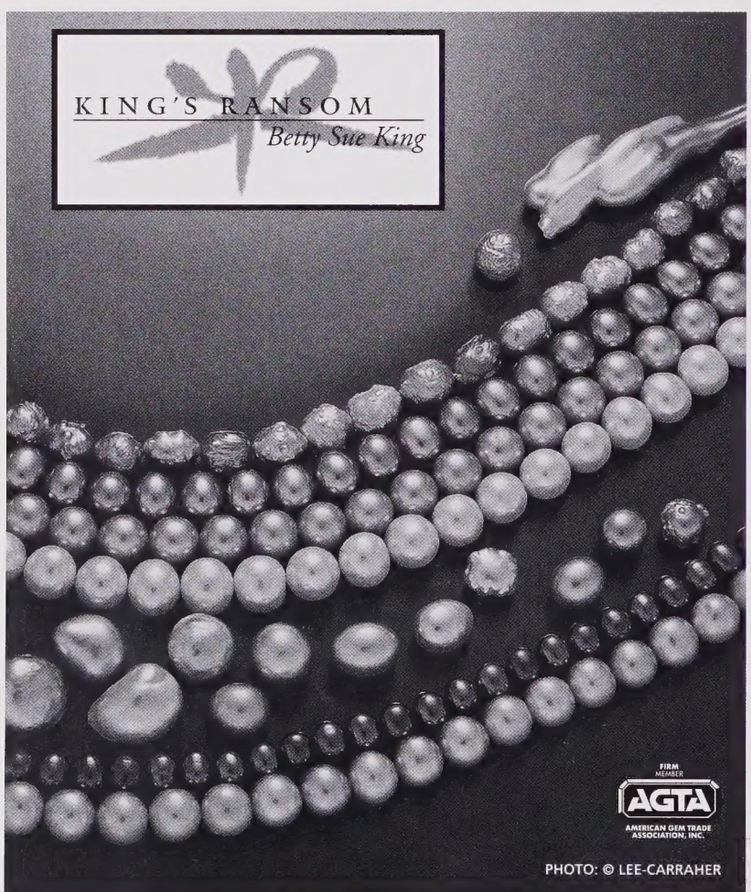


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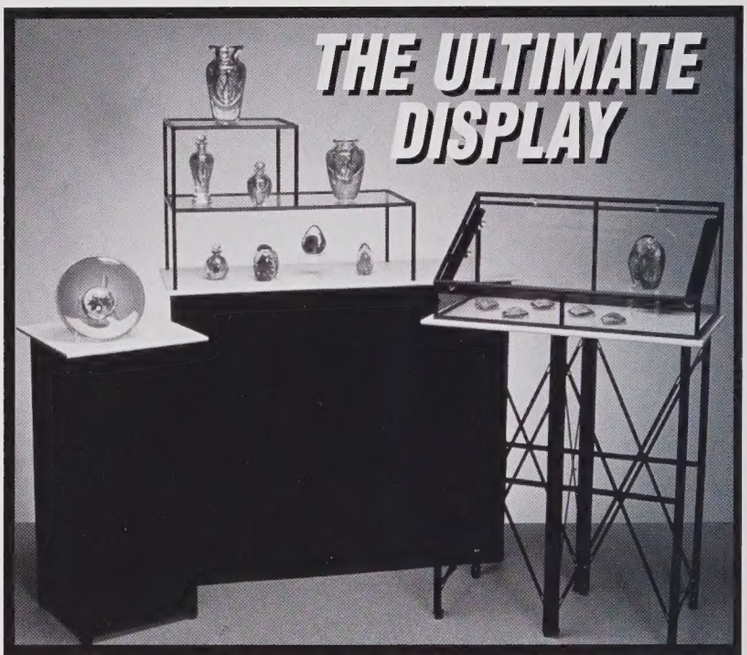

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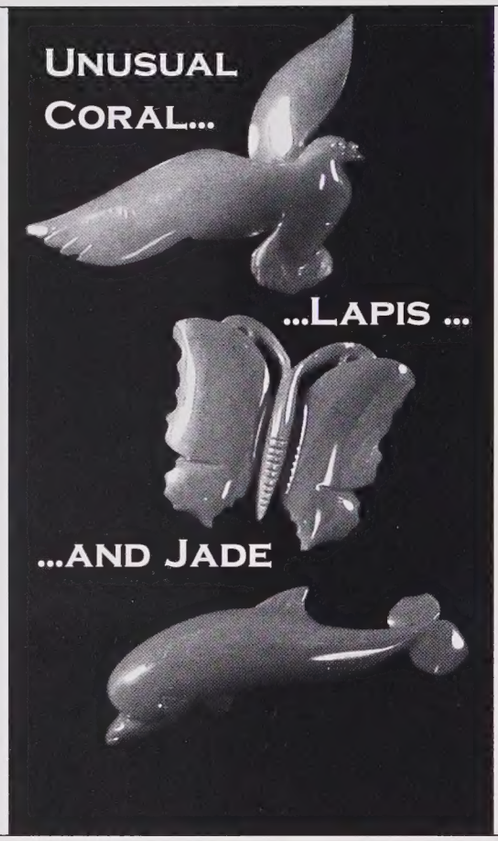

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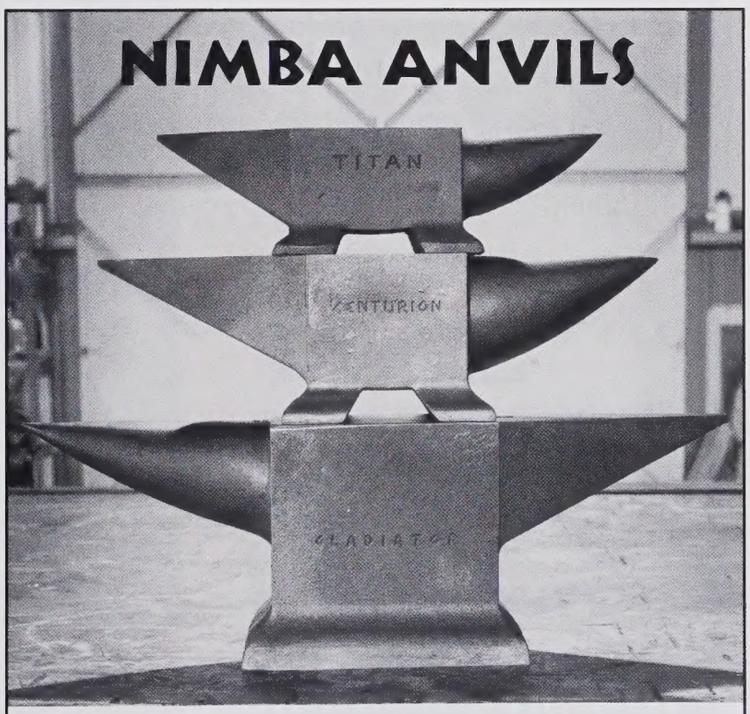


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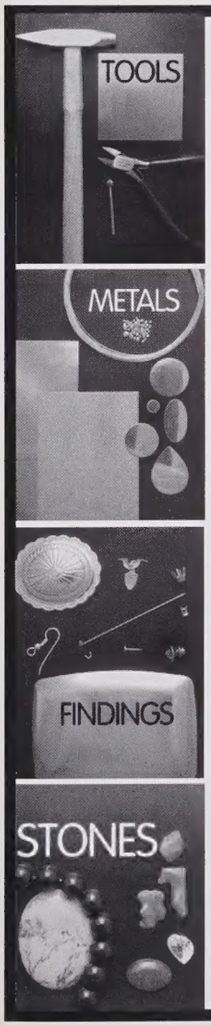


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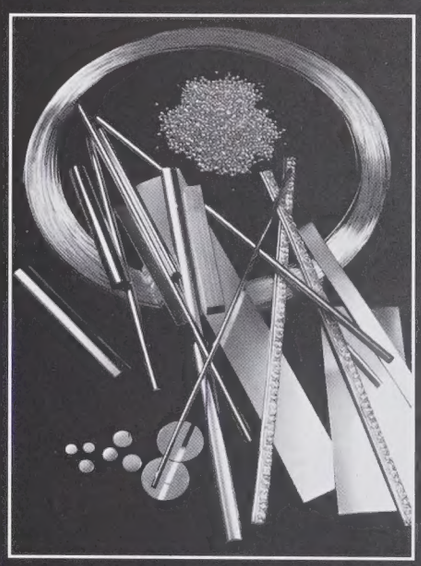

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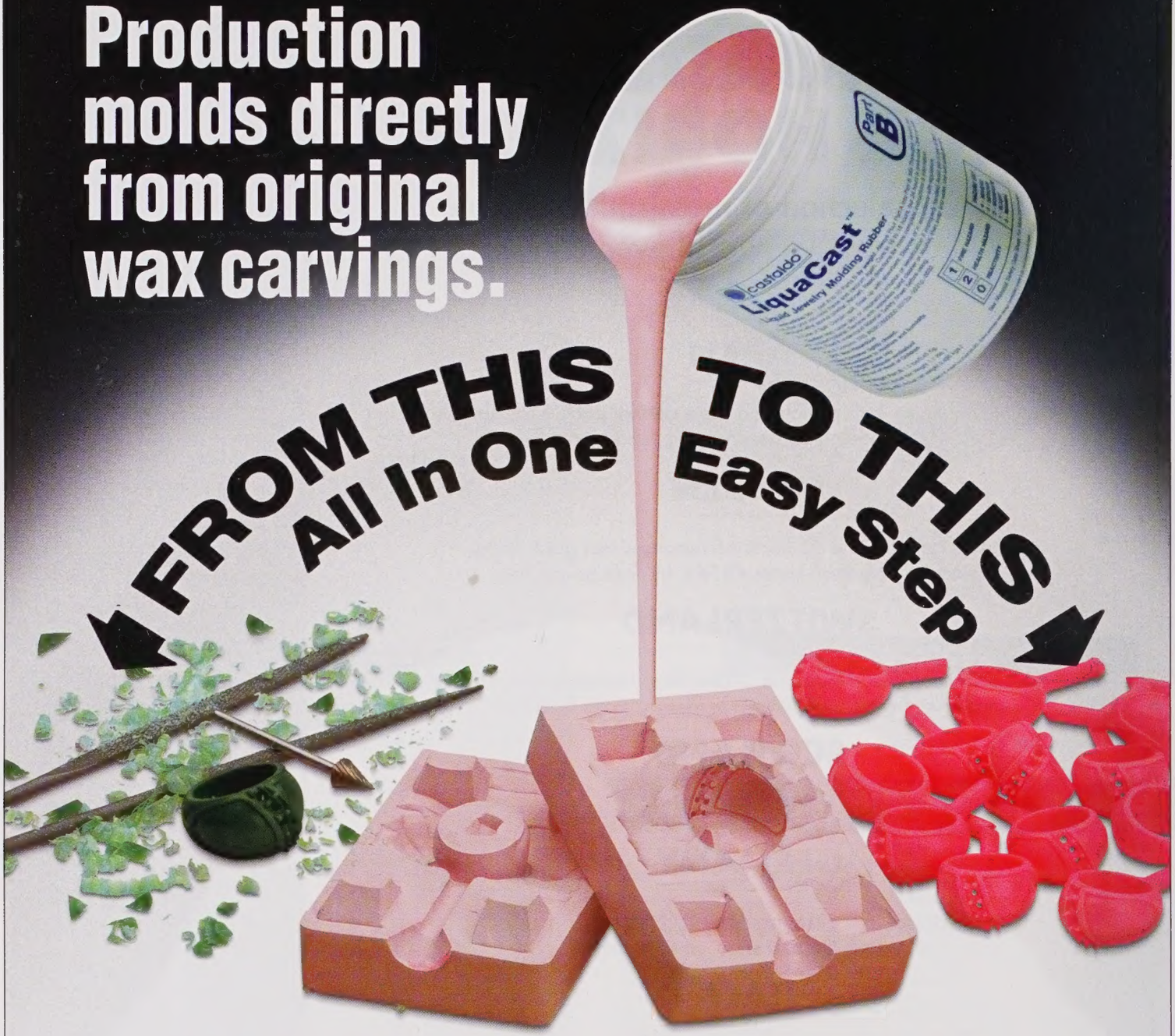


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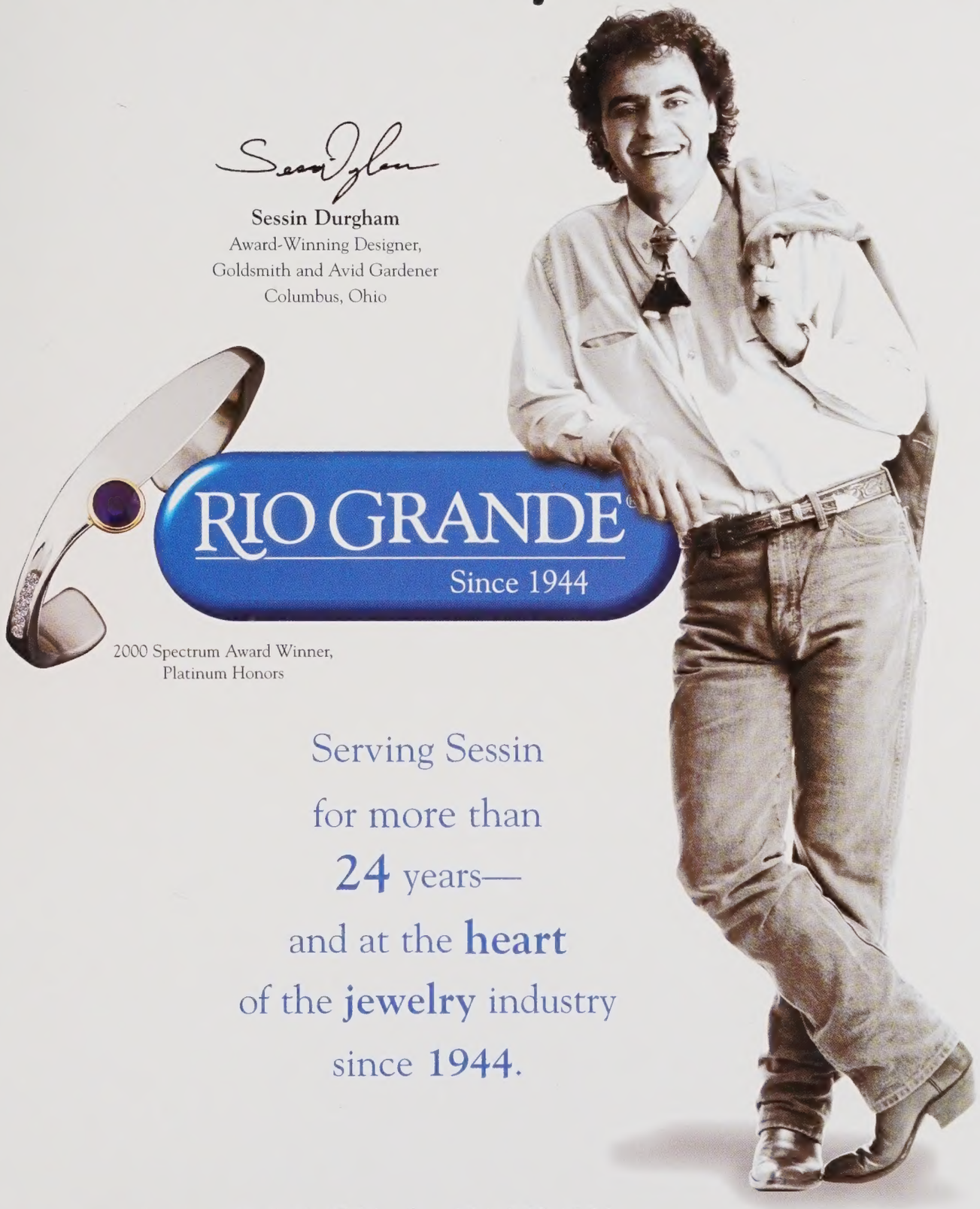

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***Detail*** *Locking top door with integral bur tray, two concealed security drawers, raised lip around bench top, two inch thick butcher block top.*

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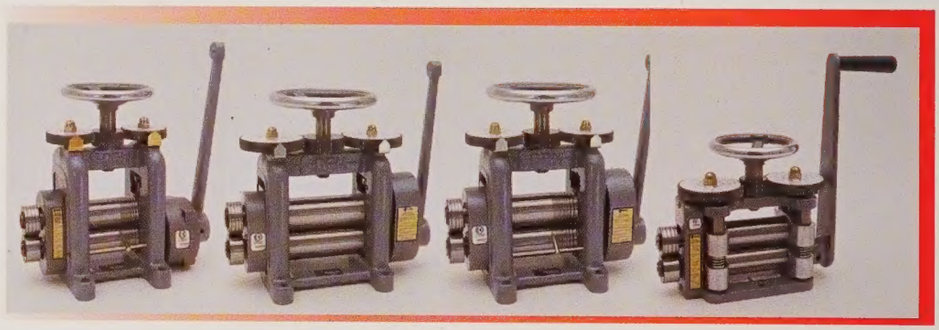

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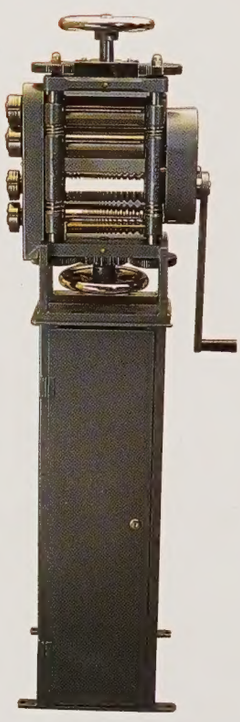

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